FAITH'S CERTAINTIES

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Faith's certainties

FAITH'S CERTAINTIES

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LONDON: HODDER AND STOUGHTON

Faith's Certainties

By

Robert J. Drummond, D.D.

Edinburgh

Author of 'Faith's Perplexities,' etc.

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TO

MY CHILDREN

PREFACE

A COMPLAINT or criticism of the preaching of the present day is that it is lacking in the notes of conviction and authority. The same complaint might be made of the attitude of many in the Christian community towards the faith. It is 'like people, like priest.' The reason in each case is not far to seek. The people have been unsettled by the critical spirit which prevails. With every fact, doctrine, personality, put into the witness-box and questioned and cross-questioned, they are left uncertain as to what is trustworthy and what is untrustworthy, uncertain if there is anything to be sure of at all. But not only so, they become suspicious of the man who ventures to treat some points as settled, and demands adhesion to them. They suspect

him either of obscurantism or dogmatism, assume that either he does not know any better or is prone to lay down the law. The fear of this adverse judgment reacts on the preacher, and whatever may be his convictions, he is tempted to put things simply tentatively rather than positively in the hope of conciliating popular prejudice, and of gaining a patient hearing for what he believes to be true and of solemn importance for his hearers' eternal well-being.

This may be carried too far. There are matters on which men were positive, but for which they really had slender authority, on which there was room for a variety of opinion, and which did not enter into the substance of the faith. It was a weakening instead of a strengthening of the Christian position to insist on one view of them as alone legitimate. Sooner or later men inevitably kick at the '*Quicunque vult*' attitude. But there are essentials in the Christian religion. There are points on which a man can say, 'thus saith the Lord.' There are matters on which he ought to be

certain, and to speak with authority. Whether he be a preacher or not, there are facts, truths, experiences, in the Christian religion, of which a man ought to be able to speak with the conviction that comes from experience, if he is to be ranked as a believer in Jesus Christ at all, if he is to be entitled to the name of Christian. And the only authority that is real, that makes itself felt as such upon a man's fellows, is the authority that belongs to the man who speaks with the conviction and certainty which spring from personal experience. 'One thing I know: whereas I was blind, now I see'—this man is an authority, and speaks with commanding effect. 'I know whom I have believed'—men must give weight to the utterances of one who speaks like that.

In this volume the author has sought to set forth in popular form what are the certainties of the Christian faith, the points on which there can be no dispute, the truths which enter into the very marrow of the faith, and have often compelled an admission of their inherent truthfulness, even from men who remain out-

side the company of believers. That is why he has repeatedly referred in support of them to writers who cannot be regarded as authorities on Christianity. These writers know men, however; and their testimony is like the testimony of a Napoleon to Christ, of value not so much because of what he was, as because of what he was not.

We live in times when it is necessary to re-assert the essentials of our common Christianity and call men to adhesion to them for their own sake and for the world's sake. If the world is to pass successfully through the great transformation which is in progress, with new races coming to the front, with new discoveries bringing the world of nature more and more under man's sway, with democracy rapidly coming to its own and recasting society on a new basis, then Christians must be able without misgiving to re-assert Christian principles, for these alone will secure lasting beneficial conditions. They must be true to these principles, and not shrink from living up to their practical consequences. But to do this,

they must be sure of themselves and of 'the things that are most surely believed among us.' This book is offered to Christians who have any misgivings or hesitation as a brief statement of the bases of Christian truth, where they may feel that they can stand firm.

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CHRISTIANITY A REVELATION

'The mystery of Christ . . . in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.'—EPHES. iii. 4, 5.

CHAPTER I

CHRISTIANITY A REVELATION

NOT once but repeatedly the Apostle Paul emphasises the fact that he owed no indebtedness to any man for his knowledge of Christ. In many of the passages where he does this he is on the defensive, claiming independent divine authority for the views of truth and duty which he was setting forth as the essentials of the Christian faith. He received it from God. But when he insists on this it is not by way of contrasting himself with other men. It is to maintain his right to a common footing with them. And in other passages he does not speak for himself alone. He is doing what others also do. He is pointing to the source from which all knowledge of God must come, namely, from God Himself. There is a passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians dealing with the matter, for instance, in the course of which he

says in so many words, 'the mystery of Christ in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.' In that passage he is not maintaining his right to a hearing against hostile critics. He is reassuring his readers as to the thoroughness and fullness of his understanding of what Christianity really is, an understanding which he shared with all Christ's spirit-taught and accredited messengers. It is Christianity as a whole that he is speaking about. He calls it 'the mystery of Christ.' He explains it as the truth 'that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of God's promise in Christ by the gospel.' But that is just what Christianity is,—an offer of salvation, not a Jewish perquisite but a world-wide offer of peace between God and man mediated through Jesus Christ, the Son of God; a religion, or binding back of the souls of men to God and to one another, in which all distinctions of nationality and colour are obliterated and men are dealt with on the broad ground of their common humanity. That is the substance of Christianity. And Paul reminds us where it came

from:—from the only source from which it could come and inspire any confidence in the reliability of the offer and promise, namely, from God Himself. In other words, Christianity is a revelation. And when Paul says that, he is only repeating what is said by the great Founder of our religion: 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast . . . revealed those things.' Christ is our chief authority for this conviction of Christian hearts, that our Christian Faith is a direct revelation of the inmost secret of the heart of God made by God Himself.

1. First of all, let us notice what is implied in this, when we say that Christianity is a revelation.

For one thing, there is implied a contrast. When we say that Christianity is a revelation, we mean that it is not an induction or an invention. The knowledge of God and His way of salvation which it affords has not been reached by the careful study of reverent and profound minds gathering a truth here and a truth there from the religious ideas of Egypt and India, Greece and Palestine, or by passing those ideas through the sieve of criti-

cism and comparison, rejecting all that was mere crude superstition and retaining only the pure essence of the spiritual. Doubtless Christianity had its adumbrations in other faiths. It had its presuppositions and preparation in the faith of ancient Israel. It had its affinities with everything that was excellent in every Godward movement of the souls of men. But Christianity is not merely the product of these factors. Still less is it a brilliant invention of a gifted young Jew of Nazareth, who, in a moment of spiritual exaltation dared to think of God as his Father and died a martyr's death in loyalty to this conviction. It is not the bold manifesto of a group of devoted followers of this young hero or of any one of them, weaving specious theories about the manner of the tragedy of his life, and getting rid of awkward facts by setting myths afloat about his birth and death. No! No Christian believes that. And a Christian is asserting the very reverse of that when he says that Christianity is a revelation. He means that the Christian Gospel is a message from God Himself, making something known to men, which they can absolutely depend upon, but

which they could never have found out for themselves.

And after all, is this to be wondered at? Isn't it true of every religion? Every religion purports to be a revelation. Ay and more, every religion in so far as it is true—and there is an element of truth in every religion—is what it purports to be, a revelation. We need not be surprised at the statement that there is an element of true self-revelation by God Himself to the hearts of men in even the crudest religions. Not only are the ideas of religion and revelation, as Sabatier says, 'correlative and religiously inseparable,'[1] but it is in line with Scripture. 'God left not Himself without a witness.' The Old and New Testaments are both full of this thought. The sun in the heavens is His herald. The recurring seasons, the gifts of harvest-tide, are His messengers. Conscience and the sense of right and wrong are His witness within. And when the Parsee worships the sun he has caught one ray, and reflected it, from the light divine. The Greek worshipping Demeter, the great Earth-

[1] Sabatier, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, p. 34. The whole passage is very illuminating.

Mother, has caught and reflected another. Confucius heard a voice divine in the call of duty. And the Furies with their lash for the transgressor were held in holy reverence because to their worshippers they seemed the vindicators of a law which, men discerned, had come into their hearts from God. It is where and when God shows Himself that men fall down and worship. Till then they are seekers with a void in their hearts which nothing earth-born can satisfy. But God appears; God reveals Himself; and they recognise Him and reverence and adore. A revelation alone can satisfy the religious instinct which is an essential element in our human nature.[1]

When the Christian, therefore, says that Christianity is a revelation from God, he is not making a statement unreasonable in itself, making a claim for his religion which is peculiar to it. He is only claiming for his religion what must be true of it, if it is in reality a religion at all. If it were not this, it could give its adherents no sense of confidence, no rest in their search for truth, no repose for the yearnings of the soul. It is not by search-

[1] MacGregor, *Jesus Christ the Son of God*, p. 36.

ing we can find out God. God must show Himself, and ultimately so show Himself that we can be left with no misgivings, with no misapprehensions as to what He really is. Then men know the Truth and know that they know it, and the Truth makes them free.

2. Being satisfied that our religion is and must be a revelation if it is a religion at all, the second point for us to consider is the way in which the revelation has been made. How has God shown Himself?

Now let me premise that this is an historical question, and not a theoretical question. We are not to come to the consideration of this matter with preconceived opinions as to how a revelation of Himself ought to be given by God. Preconceived notions are dangerous implements. Naaman nearly lost a cure by approaching Elisha with his mind made up as to how the thing ought to be done. So here. This is an historical question. How has God revealed Himself? If we notice that, we shall also be impressed with the supreme wisdom of His method.

(*a*) For one thing, God has revealed Himself progressively. He has come like the 'sun

shining more and more unto the perfect day.' It was not by a single, simultaneous flash that all the glory of God appeared before the eyes of men That would have blinded them. Perhaps that was what God meant when He said, 'No man shall see My face and live.' God gradually let the truth dawn upon them. He bore patiently with many a mistaken notion and crude idea which they associated with it, and to which they clung, till the power of the truth which He had communicated gradually overmastered everything and raised them to a higher spiritual level. Then they were ready for fuller measure, and a new vision came. So the eyes of humanity were prepared for the entrance at last of 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' Nay, more; the same process is at work still. And the history of Christianity is the history of a steadily enlarging understanding of the wealth of the revelation which there is in Jesus Christ our Lord.[1]

Now this sheds light on the whole meaning of religion. It warns us that we are not to

[1] Mozley, *Ruling Ideas*, Lecture x.

look for its essence in its crudest, its embryonic forms. That is rather to be found in its perfect product. This warns us against the claptrap which passes itself off for broadness of mind, and tells us that one religion is as good as another, that essentially all religions are the same—the groping of hearts after God. Yes, but it is not in the embryonic you ever find the essential. Embryologists tell us that the germ of a monkey is indistinguishable from that of a man. Are we on that account to say that essentially a monkey and a man are the same? Why, the very embryoes, though we cannot distinguish them, must be different, else why does the one develop into a monkey and the other into a man? So with religions. It is by the perfect specimen, not the first attempt, you must estimate their worth. And in religion nothing is good enough, nothing is all that religion should be, but the best. When we speak of religion in this sense, there is only one religion, the perfect example—and that is Christianity, God's perfect revelation of Himself.[1]

(*b*) For a second thing, God's revelation of

[1] Caird, *Evolution of Religion*, i. 40 ff.

Himself is not intellectual only, but personal. What I mean is this. Christianity is not simply a theory of things in their relation to God propounded to the mind of man as a reasonable account of the universe. Or within narrower limits, it is not simply a theory of reconciliation between God and man the sinner which may satisfy all legitimate claims, and to be accepted or rejected as it can sustain or not careful logical scrutiny. Christianity is all that, and must be satisfactory on these lines, if it is all it claims to be. But it is much more than this. It is not a theory; it is a Person. It appeals not to man's intellect, his head; it appeals to the whole man, to his imagination, his heart, his will. It is not like a system of mathematics offered for the scrutiny of your brains. It is more like Euclid asking you to trust him to build you a house that will stand. It is God Himself coming to you in the Person of His Son to enlist your confidence by taking you into His confidence. He gives us a glimpse of His plans, purposes, ways; but He wants more than our finite judgment on these. He forewarns us that we may not entirely understand these—'My thoughts are

not your thoughts.' God appeals to our whole manhood and womanhood burdened with sin, perplexed with doubts, impelled by generous instincts, with deep down a sense of right and wrong not yet obliterated, with hearts capable of a great love, and wills ready to obey a worthy Lord. And He says, 'Behold Me; am I not enough for you children of men? do not I satisfy the hunger and thirst of your natures? What say your hearts?' That is Christianity. Bend your minds to it, but still more bend your hearts and bend your wills. It is a Person making a personal appeal.[1]

It is partly that there may be no mistake about this that Christianity is so inseparably bound up with the historic figure, Jesus of Nazareth, in whom God appeared among men. Often men have tried to dispense with Jesus and retain Christianity. They have tried to distinguish between the religion which makes Jesus its centre, and the religion which Jesus Himself held, between certain religious ideas gleaned from the teaching of Jesus and illustrated in His life which they call the essence of Christianity, and the story of His life as you

[1] Moberly, *Problems and Principles*, p. 24 ff.

have it in the Gospels, the mere shell, they say, for this kernel. But this method has never satisfied. However alluring it may seem to philosophic speculators, it has failed to satisfy the great common heart of humanity. And why? Because the instinct in man is right which finds in a person, and not in a group of ideas, the truest presentation of God. It is in Christ Himself that there is a revelation adequate to the manysidedness of man's cravings. Here is God with an appeal to heart and will as well as to the mind of man.

(*c*) A third point to be noted about God's method of revealing Himself is that He has revealed Himself first to individuals, and then through them to their fellows.

This might seem at the first blush of it very strange procedure on God's part. His intention and desire is to reach all men. Why, then did He not approach them all, address Himself to them all, directly and personally? Various reasons, in the light of the value of the method which He actually has adopted, could be given for that. But as I said at the outset, the question is irrelevant and not very wise. The matter for us is what God actually did,

and the honours, responsibilities, and duties which it imposes upon us. And what God did was, He let one or two make an excursion into the great unexplored world of His grace, travel some distance into the trackless forests of the unsearchable riches of Christ, and then come back and tell their fellows. As the poet says of another subject:

'God took care to hide that country till He judged
His people ready;
Then He chose me for His whisper; and I've found
it; and it's yours.
Yes, "your never-never country"—yes, "your edge of
cultivation,"
And "no sense in going further"—till I crossed the
range to see.
God forgive me. No, *I* didn't. It's God's present to
our Nation.
Anybody might have found it, and—His whisper
came to me.'[1]

Now that is true about all discoveries. It is true of the great explorers of earth's territories. It is true of the great discoverers in applied science. It is through the patient excursions and experiments of single indi-

[1] Kipling, *Five Nations*, The Explorer.

viduals that the great resources of the habitable world have been brought within the ken and reach of man. And the same thing is true of the realms of grace. It is through individuals whom God has inspired that the open secret has been recognised and pointed out to other men.

There is just one clause in that verse of Kipling's that is not true: 'Anybody might nave found it, and—His whisper came to me.' These words may be dictated by the modesty of true originality. But they are not true, at any rate in the world of grace and knowledge of God. It is not a case of 'anybody' stumbling on a discovery here. 'The pure in heart shall see God.' This is a case of specially trained experts, but the training is the training of the character, the soul, the spiritual aptitudes. Look at the whole series of men through whom the revelation of God has come to their fellows. Take them from the Old Testament—Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea—was there anything of haphazard here? What a discipline every one of these had to go through before they saw God, the revelation of Himself which God had for

them and through them for their time! Or consider the care with which the Lord Jesus selected and trained the men whom He associated with Himself, and to whom, by the life He led, the deeds He did, the words He spoke, the death He died, the triumph over the grave which He achieved, He revealed Himself as the Son of God. How He kept them by Him till they knew Him, and having seen Him had seen the Father! Recall the training of Paul himself, separated from his mother's womb for a revealing of God in him—that is, to him in his inmost soul, and through him to mankind at large. It is no accident that the revelation of God comes in the first instance to particular men. As Cheyne says, 'There is a gracious proportion between the revelation vouchsafed and the mental state of the person receiving it.' Or as Browning puts it,

> 'God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear.
> The rest may reason and welcome; 'tis we musicians know.'

God makes His revelation 'to holy apostles and prophets by His Spirit.'

There is this amount of truth, it should however be said, in Kipling's phrase, 'anybody might have found it.' God's revelation of

Himself is an open secret, as we say. When once it has been seen and pointed out by His seers, it is there for anybody to see it for himself. And what is more, it will never come home to a man with the convincing power that it is the very truth of God which nothing can shake till he has found it out for himself. I said at the outset that Christianity, the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ, was a revelation, and neither an induction nor an invention. But if it is to be a living force, transforming, controlling, and mastering a man's whole life, gripping him with a constraining power from which he cannot escape, then it must come to him sooner or later as a surprise, be a discovery. He must see it for himself at the angle where the light from it transfigures the whole look of things, and he wonders why he never saw it before, because now he can see nothing else. It must become his very own, with self-evidencing power, which no arguments can, nor are needed, to strengthen. And it can do this, for it is the very light of God, and Sabatier pertinently asks, 'How could it be proved that light shines except by forcing those who are asleep to awake and open their eyes?'

'Whoso hath felt the Spirit of the Highest
Cannot confound nor doubt Him nor deny :
Yea ! with one voice, O world, though thou deniest,
Stand thou on that side, for on this am I.'

That, then, is the Christian's position with regard to the nature of his religion. It is no scheme of 'cunningly devised fables,' but the very truth of God made known by Himself. It has come to us embodied in its final form in the Person of His Son. It has been borne in, in the first instance, upon the souls of specially gifted and receptive men by His Holy Spirit, and they in turn have proclaimed and pointed it out to their fellow-men, and urged them to cordial acceptance of it with the imposition of but one test—practical experiment. There remains one question with regard to it which every man must put to, and answer for, himself —How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ?

THE AIM OF CHRISTIANITY—SALVATION

'God sent . . . His Son into the world . . . that the world through Him might be saved. —JOHN iii. 17.

CHAPTER II

THE AIM OF CHRISTIANITY—SALVATION

WHAT are you going to say to the man who tells a Christian that he has no use for religion, no use for Christianity, that Christianity is worth nothing to him? Will you tell him that that is a utilitarian way of looking at things, that truth deserves attention for its own sake? He will simply reply that that is all very fine, but he's a practical man, and if religion, if the Christian religion, cannot render him some practical benefit, he is not going to waste time upon it. And the man has reason on his side.

Perhaps Christianity has laid itself open to this antagonistic attitude by failing to make its aim sufficiently clear and wide, or by failing to show distinctly enough that what it aims at is of pre-eminent importance to man, that it is designed to do him and his kind the greatest service imaginable. Religion has not infre-

quently allowed itself to be thoroughly misunderstood, till there requires to be said of it, for its own sake, what our Lord said of the Sabbath: 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.' Religion, the Christian religion, has had its days when it has been resolved into a great system of rites and observances to which men were called on to attend, but which were without any obvious connection with the moral and spiritual life of the worshipper. Instead of their serving him, his worth as a man was estimated by the way he served them. Sooner or later there must come a healthy reaction and protest against that in the interest of the truth itself.

1. There is a passage in the book of Isaiah (xlv.-xlvii.) where this matter is treated at length; and three very mistaken views of the aim of religion are exposed. Before we go further we may look at these.

(*a*) The first of them is the idea that religion is meant to be a sort of mystery business; as if its intention were to overwhelm man with awe at the majesty of God by paralysing him with a sense of his own ignorance and in-

competence to understand the mind or ways of God. And doubtless when men grow arrogant and pretend to something like omniscience, they do need to be brought up by forcible reminders of the limits of their capacities. But there is something wrong about a religion which only leaves man in the presence of this very perplexing world more mystified than ever, and saying, 'Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself' (Isa. xlv. 15). The world is perplexing enough, but there are ways of speaking about God that make us feel that if there were no such God, half the perplexity would be materially lightened.

Now all such views of God, any religions founded on mere mystery, are wrong. Not only do they lend themselves to the schemes of charlatans who traffic in them to enslave the souls of their fellows—indeed they owe their origin to such designing impostors—but they are right in the teeth of the character of God. He repudiates them. He meets men who say He hides Himself with the reply, 'I have not spoken in secret . . . I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye My face, in vain.' And that is pre-eminently true of Christi-

anity. In it you have a gospel simple and direct, so that he who runs may read, and he who reads may run. It is a message the simplest can understand. The common folks heard Christ gladly. Whatever Christianity is, it is not an exhausting puzzle, designed to send men past God Himself to a priesthood of experts who must unravel the mysteries and manage the business for the others.

(*b*) Another mistaken notion was vividly suggested to Isaiah by the sight that came up before his eyes as he saw Babylon captured and its spoils carried off. But oh the irony of it! The very idols of the gods in whom they boasted had to be packed in carts and dragged away by weary beasts of burden. That is what many a man's religion becomes to him. That was what religion had become in Palestine in our Lord's day. Our Lord denounced the lawyers because they loaded men with burdens grievous to be borne. It was not merely ordinances of worship, but a complex of finical enactments, permits and prohibitions, that left a man a perfect slave. And religion runs into the same groove still when men insist on meaningless distinctions of things sacred and

profane, permit this and forbid that without rhyme or reason, maintain services simply because of old custom, though the spiritual significance has gone out of them, or continue to attend them when they have ceased to serve the religious life, as if that attendance had itself some spiritual value. The same thing happens when they cling to a creed—though it be through loyalty to the past, or through fear of the unsettling effects of the drafting of a new creed—that fetters their freedom of spirit and fails to voice the most vivid convictions of their souls. Religion in these cases has become a burden, which men must bear, instead of a burden-bearer to carry them. That is how God contrasts Bel and Nebo and the other gods of Babylon with Himself. Their worshippers carry them; He says to Israel, I carry you. Here is the true conception of religion. It is something to bear up the human spirit, to give it ground to tread on and wings to soar with. It is something to lift it above earth's depressing influences, and enable it to reach the heights and breathe the purer air, something not to be borne, but to bear.

(*c*) A third fatal phase of religion, or what

passes for it, is superstition, such as prevailed also in Babylon. That is a curse and not a blessing; that is a fire to burn men as stubble, not a coal to warm them, or a fire to sit before (Isa. xlvii. 14). There is nothing more hostile to true religion than superstition, nothing more poisonous for a man's spiritual nature or his peace of mind than toying with magic, spiritualism, palmistry, crystal gazing, and what not. How often the baseless ideas set agoing in such ways tend to become obsessions, fixed ideas in silly minds, to their undoing! They are terrorised by them. They cannot get them out of their heads. They are haunted by fears of nameless disasters, dread the approach of certain days or years. Their fears breed the evils they dread to the injury of health, to the derangement of mind, to the paralysis of will, and the issue is sometimes death itself. It is a terrible curse when men forsake the living and true God and are so left to themselves as to believe a lie. The pretenders to such occult powers are a menace to the public welfare, and should be scrupulously shunned by every self-respecting citizen. How much more by every believer in the living God! This is wickedness.

I agree with a man who says religion under any of these guises has no use for him. And I will add another. I have no use for a religion, whatever its character, which is simply upheld and imposed upon a community by men who have no living interest or share in its beliefs or ordinances themselves, and see in it simply a curb on the legitimate efforts of the people to improve their circumstances. Not infrequently the religion of Christ, to its detriment in the eyes of the struggling masses, and against its own true spirit, has been manipulated in this way. Words from its sacred writings have been wrung from their context and setting to bolster up tyranny and discountenance the aspirations and efforts of men after better social, political, and industrial conditions. But they are traitors to Christianity who lend colour to any such view of its meaning and end.

2. Let us now look at the matter in another way, but still very practical.

Professor William James, in his book on Pragmatism, proposes as the test of every truth its practical value. And he illustrates what he means in this way. Speaking of the existence of the world, he says that as regards the past it

makes no difference whether the world is the work of chance or the creation of God. But when you look to the future it is a different story. It makes all the difference in the world whether you view the future into which you must travel as a scene where you will be the sport of incalculable circumstances, or as a domain under the control of a God whose will is law and His law is righteousness, on whom you may depend, and to whom you must give an account. Now the same is true of the whole content of the Christian faith. Face the facts of life, and the message of Christ assumes momentous significance. These facts to a thinking mind awaken grave misgivings, present conditions as between man and God which are radically wrong, but which we are powerless to put right. And it will not do to say that the healthy mind will not brood about these things, but do the right and take its chance. Probably no classifier would think of putting Voltaire in any other than the healthy-minded class. But he insisted on the recognition of the existence of pain, suffering, waste, as an indisputable reality which men must in some way seek to remove. John Morley again

speaks pungently of Emerson and the fact that he had 'little to say of that horrid burden and impediment on the soul which the churches call sin, and which, by whatever name we call it, is a very real catastrophe in the moral nature of man.' [1] If ever there was a healthy mind it was that of our Lord Jesus Christ, but who like Him saw the completeness of the contrast between what the world is and what God intended it to be? He saw greed, covetousness, hypocrisy, all the unholy brood hatched in the heart of man, and He said these defile the man, and his case is hopeless till his heart is clean. No, we must face facts, the facts as to man's relation to God and the inevitable issue if things remain as they are. We must recognise that there is something seriously wrong with us, and that, as Carlyle says, the beginning and the end of it is just this, that we have forgotten God. And religion, the Christian religion, seeks to reawaken the slumbering memory. Nay, it is worse than forgetfulness. There is in us an irrational but instinctive antagonism to law, any law, even if—ay, especially if—it be God's law, and that antagonism is sin. The

[1] See *Amiel's Journal*, 303.

aim of Christianity is to change all that, to defeat sin, to restore harmony into man's discordant life by bringing him once more into tune with God. And that is the use of Christianity; that is the aim of this religion.

As one has lately put it, 'The Christian religion, speaking practically, begins when the question is asked, 'What must I do to be saved? . . . Nature has not a word to say. Neither has human nature. If there is a way of salvation at all . . . it is of God.' In other words, the Christian religion aims at providing men with God's answer to two questions: (*a*) God's own question, What must I do to save man? (*b*) Man's question, What must I do to save myself?

(*a*) The Christian religion is pre-eminently a practical thing. It provides God's answer to His own question, What must I do to save man?, but it does so not so much by words as by facts. It presents to us Jesus Christ, the Son of God, sent into the world to take away sin and so save the world. That is His own account of Himself, often repeated—'I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.' When a call was not sufficient, when they heard Him as they heard Him not, and

turned again to their engrossment in worldly affairs, He addressed Himself to the task in another way—dealt with them individually, 'for the Son of Man,' like the shepherd with one sheep of a hundred gone astray, 'was come to seek and to save that which was lost.' When the fascination of His spirit, genial, patient, arresting, tender, and strong, could reach only one or two, He broke the fetters of time and space by submitting to death, finding it expedient thus to go away, 'for the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.' That they might never forget it, He embodied the meaning of His mission in His memorial rite: 'This is My body which is broken for you'; 'this is My blood of the New Covenant, shed for many for the remission of sins.'

Sin, in God's eyes, is the great disintegrating factor. And the tendency to undervalue Christianity is due to our failure to estimate aright the malign nature of sin. At the present moment we are not so sensitive to sin in the individual heart as we are alive to its hideous effects in the vicious and degrading ways of our time. Gambling, betting,

drunkenness, sexual vice, and all that is implied in the two words 'the Fast Set' and 'the Slums,' all revolt us; but they would be a stage nearer their elimination if we would call them by their right name—sin. The social sores of our day, sweated labour, sordid dwellings, a submerged tenth, would be nearer disappearing if we called the conduct in purchaser and employer which produce them by its true name—sin. That is to say, it is not a system simply that is wrong, but hearts of men who uphold it because they profit by it, and the evils are not only a wrong to humanity, but an offence against God. Do we recognise the seriousness of that statement? It means ruin, eternal ruin, for the souls that persist in them. We do not half believe that. But God knows it is true, and God wishes to save. He wants to re-establish among men the blessed ideal of the Kingdom of God, where all these anomalies are impossible. But why is human society all out of joint? Because of the ruptured relationship between man and God. Men have got out of touch with their Head and Lord. No wonder they are at sixes and sevens among themselves. But the Kingdom cannot be re-

constituted till men are set right with God, a task which needs individual handling. God's kingdom, the world's peace and unity, is restored by men's entrance into it, swearing new allegiance to its laws, one by one. Were this the place, I should like to show that this is the point where socialism and individualism find their need of one another and learn that each without the other is a torso. Meantime, that was the problem—how to get men back to one another, men who realise that the evil in their condition is due to their alienation from each other. The only way to it was first to get them to see that their mutual alienation was itself the fruit of hearts alienated from God, and that the way back to each other was by return to Him.

How could God get them back? Christianity tells us how He has tried, and in the telling hopes to win us. God did it by coming among them, suffering with them, dying for them. Christianity is just the record of that mission; its aim is the aim of Christ. Christ came to rescue man from all the forces that ruin his prospects, that defraud him of the true good, and that impose upon him the meretricious

substitutes that please for a moment, pander to the senses, soon satiate, but never satisfy. His method of working had all this in view. His coming in human flesh was His making their cause His own. His suffering with them was the proof that suffering is not the worst ingredient in man's cup, but may be made to serve higher ends. And His death is the sacrifice by which was exposed the hatefulness that lurks in the very heart of sin. All this intervention is God's practical answer to the question, What must I do to save men? a practical answer to the most urgent question that can arise in the bewildered and anxious heart of man. 'God sent His Son into the world that the world through Him might be saved.'

(*b*) But Christianity supplies the answer to the other question—man's question—What must I do to save myself? In the mind of man that is the first question that arises when the realities of the situation come home to him and he sees his hapless condition. But it is a cry of consternation, of a distracted soul conscious very soon of its own helplessness. And it is a cry that finds an echo in the heart

of every earnest man or woman who tries to rescue a fallen brother or sister from his fate. What are we to do? Why are we so helpless? Why have we no answer? Why can we do nothing? Rousseau has a striking remark about that. He says God gives this answer to our consciences, 'I made thee too weak to come out of the pit, because I made thee strong enough to avoid falling into it.' Ah! but that is to be wise after the event. God has a better answer. Christianity tells us there is hope of escape, but only by God's intervention and our implicit reliance upon Him. 'Have faith in God,' says Christ, 'and as the guarantee of His trustworthiness, consider My mission, and the conditions under which I have carried it out.' It is the aim of Christ not simply to tell men that the secret of enjoying salvation is faith, but to do this in such a way as to evoke the faith. That is the meaning of the method of His mission. And the Christian religion is essentially the circulation of this good news by men convinced of its truth so as to awake their fellows to a sense of their need and of the ample provision for it, and to inspire them to conform to the simple

conditions on which the lost relations can be happily restored.

Can any man, then, other than a selfish worldling, say that he has no use for such a religion as this? Not if he thinks for one moment of the meaning of his words. This is the most vital concern for the lives of men. It lies at the root of every problem. And a man who is ignoring Christianity or neglecting Christ is leaving out of account the one factor that will give cohesion and lasting worth to his scheme of life for himself or for his fellow-men. His mind must reckon with Christ if he is to understand things. His heart must reckon with Christ if he is to get fired with an enthusiasm which is a pure, unselfish flame. His will must be surrendered to Christ if he is to help to bring in the true brotherhood of man, the Kingdom of God. His soul must be inspired with absolute confidence in Christ if he is to live life through without faltering and misgiving. The aim of Christianity is the highest good of man and the glory of God. And if a man is to live for these worthiest ends, he must make the aim of Christianity his own, make Christ his religion.

THE
PRESUPPOSITIONS OF CHRISTIANITY
THE OLD TESTAMENT

'Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.'—MATT. v. 17.

CHAPTER III

THE PRESUPPOSITIONS OF CHRISTIANITY—THE OLD TESTAMENT

OUR Christianity is unique, a thing by itself; but it has not come into existence without any ties with the past. It is original; it is not eclectic; but it has one great root from which it has sprung and of which it claims to be the perfect flower. That is the revelation of God to Israel, recorded in the sacred books of that people, the collection of which we call the Old Testament. To a full and proper understanding of Christianity, a man must know the Old Testament; he must in a measure be familiar with the religion of the Jews. His own faith has blossomed out of that, and owes much to it. The law of development, the principle of evolution, has a clear example of its working here. Indeed, an attentive study of the history of Israel shows the process at work

throughout its course and the sifting through shock of contact with ruder forms of religion, by which the faith of Judaism reached on to ever purer views of God and man and man's responsibility. In the course of it almost every type of religion was touched. The religions of the desert, of Egypt, of Canaan, of Assyria, of Babylon, of Persia — fetishism, idolatry, elemental worship—were met in contact and recoil by the Hebrew, and his knowledge of God gained from his own teachers was quickened and clarified by contrast and affinity, by fascination and protest. Under these influences it ripened till in the fullness of the time Christ came, fulfilled the law and the prophets, and superseded them by the perfect faith towards which throughout all was working. It is the presuppositions of Christianity in the Old Testament that we shall look at here. To the rest, Christianity, at any rate in its primitive and purest form, owes nothing directly. Its debts are directly, and in the first instance only, to the Old Testament faith.

1. I would even emphasise the statement in that form as my first point. It is not to Judaism as it existed in Christ's time that any

debt is due. It is to the religion which is enshrined in the Old Testament. And the distinction is vital. There is a serious difference between Judaism as Christ found it, and the religion which He recognised as the truth in the much misunderstood sacred books of His people. There was there the revelation which God had given of Himself, and there was alongside of it the man-made version which passed current in the Temple and in the synagogue, which was expounded in the schools, and which was practised by the Pharisee. The latter has its modern survival, but it is not Christianity. It is the Judaism of the present day, with the modifications and embellishments which have made it what it is in order to serve a people without a country or a central shrine, at which alone they might perform the rites which ought to be observed, but perforce must lie in abeyance. It is not to that we turn to find the presuppositions of Christianity. That has little to tell us. Our Lord, in fact, repudiated the whole body of tradition, because, as He said, the Scribes and Pharisees made void the law of God by their tradition.

What Christ approved, the springs from which He drew, was what He found for Himself in the sacred page, truths that were cherished by simple-hearted folks, 'the Quiet in the Land,' of whom His mother Mary and her husband Joseph, Simeon and Anna, and many others like them, were examples. In general, this type of religion was more in sympathy with the views of the prophets and the psalmists than with those ideas that magnified the ceremonial law and elaborated its precepts as if those were the essence of the Mosaic religion. In other words, as I say, Christianity's debt is not to Judaism but to the Old Testament. The religion of the New Testament claims to be itself the true child and heir, pupil and exponent, of God's earlier revelations of Himself through Israel's history, laws, and spiritual leaders. 'In the Old Testament,' as Wendt says, 'are the chief sources whence Jesus derived His own religious education.... But the question is not merely what the Scribes specially sought and prized in the Old Testament ... but we have also to consider what moral and religious truth, what treasures of edification, consolation, and admonition were

really locked up in the Old Testament, and what could be derived from it by every one who, with pious zeal, sought to be imbued with an understanding of the Holy Scriptures.'

2. There is a great deal in the fact just mentioned in these words of Wendt, that the Old Testament was the book on which the early religious education of the Saviour proceeded, and not only His education, but that of the whole people among whom He exercised His ministry. The consequence is that the Old Testament has been determinative of the religious ideas with which He worked, and of the very language in which He spoke of them. Let us notice this matter of language. Much of our Christianity would be quite unintelligible or misleading if we had not the Old Testament like a sort of dictionary to which to turn for the meanings of the words. Indeed, many an erroneous view of the teaching of the New Testament has been due to ignorance of the Old Testament. Many an illustration and reference in the teaching of Christ and of His apostles would be quite lost upon us if we had not the light on them which the Old Testament affords. Take words like these, Cove-

nant, Ark of the Covenant, Atonement, Messiah or Christ, our Passover, Paschal Lamb, Tabernacle, Corban, Jubilee, the Acceptable Year of the Lord. Of course we could have put a meaning into them. And often without much consideration of what the Old Testament has said about them men have done so, and interpreted them according to their own fancy, with quite misleading results. But if we really wish to know what these words mean, what are the ideas which Christ or His apostles had in their minds when they used them, and which they presupposed in their hearers and expected the words to convey to them, we must go to the Old Testament and start from that. True, these words were many of them greatly enriched in their meaning by what Christianity added to them. But that will not be appreciated if we do not begin with their earlier meaning. Take a phrase in which Jesus refers to His forerunner: 'This is Elijah which is to come.' Had we no Old Testament, what could we make of that? Here is not simply a happy comparison of a gifted contemporary with a man of distinction among the ancients. There is more than a suggestion

of John's type of character and style of preaching. There is a wedding of Christ's ministry and that of His friend John with the somewhat amorphous expectations of the people of the day, based on prophecies of the signs of Messiah's coming, giving these expectations a concrete body and interpretation which transformed them, but which drew its material from a whole stream of Old Testament thought and statement. It is needless to multiply examples. Christianity, for its very words in which to utter itself, so as at the first to be understood, presupposes the Old Testament.

3. But it is more than a question of language. Christianity accepts without further discussion or exposition the ripened views of the religion of Israel on many primary religious truths. It takes, for instance, the Old Testament view of God, of man, of the Messiah. These, of course, are views that had only gradually attained to clearness in Israel's consciousness through God's continuous teaching. And it is the mature view which Christianity assumes, and to which it adds. But what the Old Testament thus offers, it accepts without demur.

(*a*) The Old Testament never attempts to prove the existence of God. It sets the man down as a fool, *i.e.* not wrong in his head, but wrong in his will, uttering not what he thinks, but what he wishes, who says there is no God. Its very first book, with its very first words, begins with the assumption of God: 'In the beginning God.' That is the attitude of the New Testament.

Similarly, it makes its own the truth about God, for which the noblest spirits in Israel fought an incessant battle against both the degenerate members of their own race and the mistaken teachers of every other race, namely, the unity of God, Monotheism: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord.' The same is the faith of the Christian. It may be as some maintain, that only gradually did Israel understand this; that at first they believed simply that Jehovah was their God as Baal was Tyre's God, and that all they were bound to was to worship none but Him; that only gradually they realised that if this were true, it involved that there was no God but He. But undoubtedly their mature conviction was that God is one, and there is no other. And that is taken

for granted by Christianity. When it goes on to unfold the doctrine of the Trinity, it assumes the unity of the Godhead as an axiom, and as Dr. Dale said, the doctrine of the Trinity is simply the Christian affirmation of the unity of the Godhead. The same is true of the attributes of God. The Christian thinks of God as he has learned from Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, to think of Him. The God of Jacob, the Lord God of Elijah, is his God, 'the Lord God merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and in truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.' And if he has learned to call Him by an even more familiar and tender name still, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is just because he has learnt still more of the gracious nature of the God of the Old Testament, whose only begotten Son hath declared Him.

(*b*) So with regard to man: Christianity thinks of man as the Old Testament has taught him to think of him. Man as the New Testament deals with him is man made in the image of God. He is man—no isolated

unit, but linked by a thousand ties to all his race who have preceded him and to all his fellow-men amongst whom he lives. He is man, with a physical frame that needs to be nourished, clothed, and cared for; but that is the least of him. He is man, with an intelligence that lifts him high above the beasts that perish. He is man, with an immortal soul fitted for fellowship with God Himself. He is man, with the fateful right of a free will and the dread responsibility which its use involves. He is man, fallen by his own fatal choice. He is man, lost, unable to save himself, but not beyond salvation. That is man as the Christian knows him, but the New Testament offers no proofs. It takes man as it finds him in actual human experience, as does the Old Testament.

(*c*) In the same way the New Testament takes over the whole Messianic hope of the Old. It offers to its students the justification and fulfilment of that hope in Jesus, whom it presents as the Messiah, the Christ. That hope itself was a growth. The seed was the promise to Adam almost immediately after the fall: 'The seed of the woman shall bruise

the head of the serpent.' How it grew! What apparent contradictions it exhibited in its unfolding, contradictions that seemed as if they were incapable of resolution or reconciliation, till it was left with two great foci—God Himself coming to His people's rescue, and the abject, outcast, suffering Man of Sorrows, the people's Scapegoat — another word, by the way, which we only understand from the Old Testament — and yet their Saviour! Christianity took all this over, said the hope was justified along both lines, and in Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, resolved the antinomy, and expanded the hope to its widest limits, bidding Gentiles share in all that was ever offered to the Jews.

These are samples of the moral and spiritual truths which Christianity took over entire. Others could be added, but let these suffice.

4. Turn to a further general consideration. The possession of this great treasure-house of moral and religious truth accounts for many things that seem omissions in Christianity as it appears in what are its own distinctive records and in the teachings of its Founder

'Take away the Old Testament,' says John Ker, 'and even though the Christianity of the New were left, there would be an immense want in meeting the different moods of feeling and stages of thought in human nature.' There is little in the New Testament to stir the patriotic sentiments. There is little to correspond to the book of Psalms. What is there to tell us that phases of thought like those which meet us in the book of Job or of Ecclesiastes are compatible with devoutness? Nothing. But why? Is it because they are alien to Christianity? No; but because they are adequately dealt with in the first stages of revelation which Christianity adopts as its own.

This provides the answer to one of the gravest reproaches brought against Christianity in our day. We are told that Christianity is hopelessly individualistic, that it has no social gospel. Christ, it is said, is entirely taken up with the saving of the spiritual nature of the individual man from spiritual evils, and is quite indifferent to his physical and material well-being, is anxious to secure for him a place in a future heaven and does not care if he be left

meantime in a present hell. Now, to say the least of it, that is exaggerated ; to say the whole truth, it is absurdly false. To say nothing of Christ's scathing exposure of the covetousness, and denunciation of the legalised robbery of the poor and the widows and orphans, practised by Pharisees and lawyers, to say nothing of the very practical measures in His miracles of healing to meet clamant bodily needs of men, this is entirely to ignore all Christ's teaching about the Kingdom of God, which He came to inaugurate. Shrewder minds, musing on the nature of this Kingdom, have actually gone to the other extreme and claimed the Saviour as a Socialist. Be that as it may, where did the idea of the Kingdom come from? Ritschl says 'it finds its presuppositions proper solely in the religion of the Old Testament.' Now that Kingdom as forecast there and proclaimed by Christ is no mere future reign of bliss, but a reconstituted humanity governed by God's own holy laws here. And there is many a point in the regulation of man's relation to his fellows as citizen, as landlord, as employer, as workman, as merchant, as customer, as transgressor or vindicator of

public order and equity and common law; many a matter of political and industrial economics; which requires readjustment to tally with this Kingdom, but which there was no necessity for Christianity to discuss in detail, because it was already suggestively handled in the Old Testament. It was enough for Christianity to reaffirm or refine the principles by which they were to be adjusted and elevated into validity for all nations. Sanctified common-sense could do the rest.

5. That brings me to the last point,—and it is very important,—of the relation between Christianity and its great presupposition, the Old Testament. While the Old Testament is absolutely indispensable, while much of its contents forms the norm for Christian thinking on certain subjects and situations, still the Christian is not blindly to take its precepts and statements for his law of life and faith. He has to follow the example of his Master in reference to this matter. If ever any one cherished reverence for the Old Testament as God's word it was He. But He exercised extraordinary freedom in handling it, treating it as no stereotyped set of statutes which were

to be accepted without question or challenge. He recognised that certain provisions were temporary, concessions to low spiritual and moral development. The law of divorce as Moses enacted it was no part of God's pure law of marriage, but an accommodation to Hebrew hard-heartedness. The Sermon on the Mount was a great revision of the law, bringing it to the touchstone of the principle which He emphasised as lying at the heart of all righteous dealing between man and man—the principle of unselfishness, of pure, disinterested love. And the treatment even there is not intended to be exhaustive. The points He handles are simply illustrations of the principle which He applied and would have us apply in many another direction.

The apostles adopt the same attitude. The Epistle to the Hebrews handles the whole ceremonial law in a way that is most instructive in its relation to the revelation in Christ. Good as it is, the author says, suited as it was to things as they were, what is revealed in Christ, to say the least of it, is better, better all along the line, and has quite superseded the other. Paul deals with the matter in an even

stronger way, and the Epistles to the Galatians and to the Romans are full of the insufficiency of salvation by way of the law.

All that is very instructive to the Christian. It is decisive as to his attitude toward the Old Testament. He is to receive it with all reverence as containing the record of God's most direct revelation of Himself to men prior to the coming of His Son. He is to learn such great lessons from it as the unity of God, the possibility of God revealing His mind directly, unmistakably, and in a variety of ways to men, the active interest of God in the lives of men, man's individual responsibility to Him, his fall, his need of redemption, and God's purpose to effect it. But he is not to forget that in Christ he has reached a higher summit, the top of the hill of God; and the Old Testament is regulative for him only when it is interpreted in the spirit of Jesus Christ. If it is impossible to bring any part of its teaching into harmony with Christ's clear utterance, that part's day is done. It continues to be interesting as a record of the most that could be achieved, of what God had to be content with for a while. But we now know better, and He expects

better things of us. Looked at in this way the staggering problems of the Old Testament disappear, and we are left admiring the patience and skill of God in restraining, taming, transforming, and training the intractable nature of man. We see Him the same throughout, but dealing with men, as they could be dealt with, to the redemption and rescue of a fallen race.

THE PRIMARY RECORD OF CHRISTIANITY— THE NEW TESTAMENT

'Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.'

LUKE i. 1-4.

'Our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things: in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.'—2 PETER iii. 15, 16.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRIMARY RECORD OF CHRISTIANITY—THE NEW TESTAMENT

EVERY one knows where to turn if he wishes to learn what Christianity really is. Every one knows where to point an inquirer. The New Testament is the record of Christianity, the indispensable document for acquiring first-hand knowledge of what it is in germ, essence, and perfection. And it is well to state at the very outset of this chapter that there is no book of antiquity whose genuineness and authenticity have been tested with such searching and severe, and, shall I say, suspicious scrutiny; none that has so successfully stood the ordeal; none whose authorship in its various parts is anything like so well accredited as the New Testament. A wealth

of testimony as to the genuineness of the New Testament has been required, and has been forthcoming, such as has never been thought of to substantiate the writings of Plato or Thucydides, Horace or Julius Cæsar. We know far more surely that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans than that Horace wrote a single one of his Odes; far more surely that the Christ, whom the gospels proclaim, lived and died and rose again as He did than that Socrates, whom Plato eulogises, ever existed at all. And of course from the importance of the matter it is right that it should be so. But Christians ought to remember that it is so, and not be easily disturbed in their faith. They should not forget that if the evidence for the truth and reliability of the Christian record is to be abandoned, then we must close the book of history altogether. We must say 'the past is a realm of which in every department we can know no more than we do of the future.' Are the critics of Christianity, its origin and its record, prepared to take up such a preposterous position?

1. Now a very natural question as to the New Testament is, how did it come into exist-

ence, what was its origin? Let us try to answer it.

Christ, our Master, wrote nothing. No letters of His remain, no diary, no page of autobiography. Is not that a very arresting fact? Here was One anxious to reach and renovate all mankind throughout the days to come, and for Himself He is content to impress Himself by what He said, and still more by what He did, upon the lives of His contemporaries and leave His impression to tell far and wide. Does it not seem to say that to His mind deeds were more significant than words, lives transformed by His influence more eloquent testimony than books? There is no immediate need of words by pen and ink. The men redeemed by His mighty power are His 'epistles, known and read of all men.' He seems by this to say plainly that it is quite possible to get at the very essence and spirit of Christianity, the virtue of it, the fullness of the blessing that He brought to men, even though men do not possess the *ipsissima verba*, the very identical words in which He spoke. Christianity is not a religion of the letter but of the spirit. There is always a risk that, as

Dr. Moffatt says, a book religion will prove a legal religion.[1] There is always the risk of bibliolatry, the worship of the revelation instead of the Revealer. And in a way there is a justification for the taunt of the critic of Protestantism, that it has only substituted an infallible book for an infallible man. Our Lord's deliberate abstention from committing Himself or His message to writing is a warning against that mistake.

Nor did the most of the apostles write anything at all. None of them, indeed, wrote anything that the Church thought worth preserving till about twenty years after the departure of our Lord. All that time—ay, and in reality for much longer, for any writings were incidental, local, sporadic—the Church, so far as what was distinctively Christian was concerned, was without a Bible, without authoritative scripture. It lived on tradition. Its position was very much like that of all communities in pagan lands when first they gather round the missionary. The missionary is their Bible. His life is the embodiment of Christianity for them. Even though it be the case

[1] *Historical New Testament*, p. 258.

of an educated people like the Chinese, it must remain so till the Scriptures are translated. Among barbarous peoples for whom the missionaries have first of all to reduce their language to writing, and then teach them to read from the very rudiments, it often means a generation before they have any Bible but the spoken word. It is very important for us to remember that with Christian truth and life it can be so. Men can learn what Christianity is, and acquire an intelligent, working, saving knowledge of it though they can neither read nor write. But it is a total misreading of this lesson when the Roman Catholic church, on the strength of it, sets up tradition as the rival, or if not the rival, the necessary complement, of the New Testament. In the Romish church tradition and Scripture are not identical; tradition there is a heterogeneous collection of fable, assumption, and fabrication utilised to bolster up Rome's most glaring departures from the simplicity which is in Christ. In the primitive Christian Church, just as in the infant Christian communities of the modern mission field, tradition and Scripture are identical. Scripture is simply the distilled

essence of the primitive tradition reduced to writing.

That is how our New Testament came into existence. A young Christian community, called into existence by the living testimony of an apostle, found itself soon after his visit face to face with some practical question or religious problem to which, so far as the visitor had spoken, they had no definite answer from the point of view of their newly adopted Christian faith. They accordingly wrote for advice, and the reply was an epistle of Peter or Paul or James or John. Or else as death reduced the ranks of the original witnesses who had known Jesus after the flesh, many took in hand, and among them two of the apostles, to reduce to writing the story of that perfect life, and so our Gospels came into existence. They were intended to take the place of the spoken word from the lips of those who originally heard Christ speak or saw Him in His works of grace. They were intended to be confirmatory documents to which a speaker could appeal to attest his message, to be handbooks which could be placed in the hands of learners that they might become

familiar with the illuminative details of the Christian message. The New Testament arose to satisfy an inevitable demand. Indeed, the situation becomes luminous to us through a word from the mission field. 'The Gospels,' said a convert to a missionary, 'teach us all you tell us, and so we know that what you say is true.'

2. So much, then, for the way in which our New Testament came into existence. Let us try next to see in a general way what is its nature.

Broadly, there are two types of writing in it. There are letters, and there is history. We call the letters epistles, and I would include among them the Book of the Revelation. Some of these letters are written to individuals; some to particular churches; and some to groups of churches. Some deal with particular points of Christian doctrine—Thessalonians with the Resurrection and the Coming of the Lord, Galatians with the unrestricted freedom of the offer of salvation and the sufficiency, for justification, of faith in Jesus Christ, Ephesians with the Church. Others are more like small treatises on the essentials of Christianity, like

the Epistle to the Romans, the Epistle to the Hebrews, or John's first Epistle on 'the Tests of Life,' as Mr. Law calls them.[1] Others deal with questions of Christian duty, like James and Corinthians. Still others are strongly personal, like Philippians, Philemon, Timothy, and Titus, and 2 and 3 John. The historical works are the four Gospels, dealing in quite distinctive ways with the life of our Lord, and the Acts of the Apostles, giving the history of the spread of the gospel along the line by which it travelled from Jerusalem until it found a sure footing at the world's capital of the day, imperial Rome.

From a careful scrutiny of these writings, and from what has just been said, it is obvious that there is nothing systematic in the way in which this set of treatises on aspects of the Christian faith has come into existence. If there is an unmistakable unity among the treatises, it is not the result of preconcerted arrangement among the various authors. The order in which the books stand, first the Gospels and the Acts, and then the Epistles, while presenting the subject in the way in which one

[1] *Kerr Lectures for* 1909.

would naturally approach it when studying it for the first time, is almost the very reverse of the order of production. Nearly all the Epistles were written before a Gospel was penned. The writings were strictly occasional, were produced, that is to say, as occasion required. They were written to serve an immediate and specific purpose, not with a view to presenting to the ages to come an authoritative statement of the Christian faith. No one of the authors thought of himself as inditing Scripture when he penned an Epistle or a Gospel. No one of them thought of his little book as something that in later ages would take rank for his fellow Christians with the sacred books of Israel, the Law and the Prophets. He simply thought of serving an immediate need of his brethren in response to their desire or appeal and in dependence on the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. This also should be said—the writings are testamentary. By that I mean that each is in a measure a Confession of Faith. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are not simply detailing what they had observed or expiscated about the history of Jesus of Nazareth. They are telling of what He was

to their own souls. They are seeking to awaken faith in Him in the hearts of others by telling what He had become to themselves—a gracious, heavenly Saviour. And if the others write letters, you can constantly in the course of them hear the note of personal experience. They give their advice as the result of things they themselves have seen and known. There is nothing second-hand here. In these writings we are at the springs of things, and feel the beat of believing human hearts.

3. The features to which I have referred render the existence of such a collection as we now possess in the New Testament, so comprehensive, so sane, so satisfying, all the more remarkable, and it naturally evokes inquiry as to how the selection came to be made and how just these books came to occupy the position which they hold. That may engage our attention for a moment.

The answer is not to be got in a reference to a Council of the Church in the fourth or fifth century, which decreed that these were the authoritative books of Scripture for the Christian Church. The canon of Scripture,

the books that were regarded as of supreme importance, had been practically decided long before this and in quite another way. Just as the books came into existence to meet a natural demand, so it was by a natural sifting process that these books which make our New Testament acquired the place they did. They were not the only Christian writings. What Luke says at the beginning of his Gospel is no doubt equally true with regard to Christian epistolary writings. He says many had taken in hand to write what we would call Gospels. But as the years went on, from this mass of literature certain works stood out as classics. They commended themselves to the common-sense of the Christian communities as the most worthy expositions of the common faith. It was to these they turned for reliable information as to the life of the Lord while He was here on earth. It was to these they turned for the clearest presentation of the bearings of applied Christianity. And nobody who has even the most superficial acquaintance with any of the other early Christian writings can fail to be struck with the distinction that belongs to the New Testa-

ment writings as contrasted with all the rest. There is a sanity, a reserve, a serenity and a spirituality about them that is unmistakable. And there grows on the mind a profound conviction of the ripe spiritual insight of those early Christians who selected just these writings and rejected all the rest; the conviction also that it was more than human insight that was at work in this,—it must have been the work of the Spirit of God.

A consideration of one or two points should make this very clear. For instance, there is the comprehensiveness of the selection. All that is essential in Christ's revelation is amply represented, and yet there is no unnecessary repetition. In proof of this, look at a set of books where there is the temptation to think it is otherwise, viz., the Gospels. Here are four retellings of the life of Christ. Yet no one of them is superfluous. Mark, the earliest, is mainly concerned with the doings of Christ. Matthew, evidently composed with the needs of Jews before the mind of the writer, looks at the life in the light of Messianic prophecy and fulfilment, and it also makes most of the sayings of Christ. Luke deliberately sets him-

self to put some sort of order into the reminiscences of his time floating on tongue and paper, and further, fully a third of his book is a record, to which we have no counterpart in any other Gospel, of an extended journey of Jesus in new territory as His mission here drew to its close and Jerusalem the goal was constantly in sight. John again, in contrast with the other Gospels which deal chiefly with Christ's life and sayings in Galilee and outside of Jerusalem, is mainly taken up with Jerusalem incident and with those discourses and discussions which dealt chiefly with Christ's own identity and personality. Consider how much impoverished one would be were any one of the four awanting, and the need for them all is manifest. Similarly in the Epistles everything is covered. There the practical bearing of Christ's teaching and the far-reaching significance of His death and resurrection ; the many-sidedness of salvation as provision for the guilt of the past, the temptation of the present, the ruin of the future ; Christianity, as an affair of mankind as a whole—society—in the conception of the Kingdom of God, as truly as it is a matter for the individual with a soul of priceless

value to be saved;—all this is provided for and explained. It is impossible to look broadly at what we have in the New Testament without recognising the work of the Spirit of God, not only in the minds of the men and in the truths that are set forth in their writings, but also in the community which so soon knew how to sift the grain from the chaff and provide itself with sacred books to which it could turn with confidence as authoritative and ample in the presentation of the truth.

4. But when speaking of the record of Christianity, the sources, that is to say, from which an inquirer may learn what Christianity is, the documents to which an adherent may point as a statement at once of his faith and of the reasonableness of his faith, the Christian of the twentieth century has more to go upon than had the Christian of the first or of the fourth century. There are the wider records of what are called the 'Gesta Christi,' and of the progress of Christian thought. In other words, there is the history of Christianity. Just as the individual Christian is a living witness to Christ, so the faith and life of the Christian

Church down the centuries is a witness to what Christianity is, a record of what it can effect.

On the one hand, this is true in the domain of thought. In the course of its existence, by meditation and reflection upon all that Jesus and His apostles said and did, the Christian community has come to ever fuller understanding of the essential meaning of the revelation in Christ. From time to time attempts have been made to gather up the consensus of thought in the Church on the fundamental verities, and the results of these are found in the creeds and confessions of the Church. None of these is or purports to be final. Each simply states the truth with special emphasis on that aspect of it which was particularly in evidence at the time at which it was drawn up. And every later creed ought to be an improvement on its predecessors. Every later creed has the advantage of the experience that found expression in the earlier creeds to work upon. It has still fuller experience by which to sift them. And it has its own contribution of enlarged knowledge and fuller enlightenment to add. When this is considered, it becomes apparent

how futile are all suggestions of reverting to, say, the Nicene or the so-called Apostles' Creed in order to find a common platform for a re-united Christendom. True so far as it goes, the Apostles' Creed, for instance, is like all the others, a creed outgrown. The Holy Spirit has taught Christ's people so much more of the inwardness of spiritual life, of the plan of salvation and of His own work. No, reversion to a creed outgrown is not the way to a truer, more comprehensive conception of Christianity. It is only by a return to Christ and the original records, and a fresh study of them under the guidance of the Spirit and in the light of the enriched experience of Christian life and practice. We must not ignore the record of Christianity which we have in the progress of dogma, or, in other words, in the progressive unfolding of Christian truth by the Holy Spirit to the saints in their spiritual experience and devout meditations. That also tells what Christianity is. It is the Spirit's own commentary on the Scriptures which He inspired.

But so also on the other hand are what are called the 'Gesta Christi.' That means

literally 'the doings of Christ.' But it has become a phrase to express the effects that have followed in the life of humanity from the entrance into its midst of the work and Spirit of Jesus Christ. His coming has told in a multitude of ways. It has modified every relation in life. The result is the Christian ethos in which the humane and gentle virtues which came to their own through Jesus Christ have play, and which in greater or less measure are remoulding society. It is not necessary to institute a contrast just now between the world without Christ and the world with Christ. That may be done later. But the transforming power of Christ steadily permeating, sweetening, and elevating the life of mankind, continuously and in ever new ways carrying out the programme of Christianity as propounded in the synagogue at Nazareth or demonstrated before the eyes of John's disciples and pointed out to him as the clue to the personality of Christ, is a standing record of what Christianity is. And these two, the progress of dogma and the 'Gesta Christi,' with the history of missions thrown in, might be likened to three great appendices

to the New Testament, supplementing the record and bringing it up to date. They show that the movement, which Christ initiated and which the New Testament records, was no passing phase, but is the permanent, world embracing, dominant factor in the life of human kind.

THE PRIME FACTOR IN CHRISTIANITY— OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

'That in all things He might have the pre-eminence.'—Col. i. 18.

CHAPTER V

THE PRIME FACTOR IN CHRISTIANITY—OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

THERE is food for reflection in the way in which those who might have been obscurities, 'mute, inglorious Miltons,' become luminaries, in which the light of a village gains a country's notice. Look at Burns, a country ploughman, a bankrupt farmer, an excise officer in a country town of little Scotland, talking in the tongue of its common folks, and dying at the early age of thirty-seven. And yet he struck so true a note, went so straight to the heart of humanity in his singing, that his name is known and his influence felt all over the world. We feel how astonishing that is. A moment's reflection on it, however, while it will explain the possibility, will also emphasise the wonder of the spread of the knowledge and influence

of Jesus of Nazareth. A village carpenter from a despised district of a despised land, for three short years He arrested the public attention, wrote His thoughts with the tongue that was the pen of a ready writer on nothing but the fleshy tablets of men's hearts, imprinted His character in living pictures of tenderness and love upon their lives, stamped Himself upon them, and then died a felon's death. And be the resurrection a fact or not, Jesus lives and reigns ever since as the dominating figure in the world's history, with an influence and power that has never waned, but has been, and still is, ever on the increase. Amazing, isn't it? When Paul wrote to Philippi that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, a contemporary might well have been excused if he had treated the statement as a wild illusion. It is a sober fact to-day in lands that Paul's age had never even dreamed of. It is the miracle of history. 'Jesus is the dearest name in the world of to-day.' From Galilee's obscurity has flashed forth the Light of the World.

Here is the prime factor of Christianity—our Lord Jesus Christ. Inside and outside the

circle of His acknowledged followers, that is freely recognised. For He has thousands who regard Him with the profoundest reverence, set Him on the loftiest pedestal, though they disown having anything in common with His worshippers but regard for Him. It seems so obvious that Christ must be the paramount element in Christianity as scarcely to require emphasising. But it is necessary to recall both friends and foes to this fact, to say it in so many words, as a corrective to mistakes on both sides. It seems to us almost impossible to understand the virulence and bitterness with which Voltaire attacked Christianity, calling it 'the thing accursed.' But why was it? It was because of a mistake. He identified Christianity with Romanism, and never really knew Christ. And the adherents of Christianity have often been themselves to blame for such mistakes. They magnify a doctrine, a rite, an institution, as if that were the essence of Christianity, to the misleading of friend and foe, instead of keeping ever to the front that the core of Christianity is Christ. Not but what Christianity has its distinctive doctrines, doctrines of God, of Atonement, of Eternal Life. But what makes

them distinctive is the way in which they are conditioned by Christ. They are not reached or held or taught *in vacuo*, but in and through Christ.

Listen to what some outstanding men say about this, no partisans, holding, some of them, very different views of Jesus Christ from those which most of His followers hold. John Morley says: 'The Christian organisations which saved western society from dissolution owe all to St. Paul, Hildebrand, Luther, Calvin; but the spiritual life of the West during all these generations has burnt with the pure flame first lighted by the sublime mystic of the Galilean Hills.'[1] Sabatier says: 'Not only was Christ the author of Christianity but the first germ of it was formed in His inner life, and in His life, first of all, that divine revelation was made which, repeating and multiplying itself, has enlightened and quickened all mankind.'[2] And one more, Amiel, moralising on what he regards as the errors of modern Christianity and the need of what would be practically a new religion, says: 'The Person of Christ is the centre of it'; and again, 'What is specific in Christianity is

[1] *Rousseau*, i. 4. [2] *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, p. 139.

Jesus.'[1] There is no uncertainty about this note. Christianity is impossible, is non-existent, without Christ.

Some agree with this so far and then demur. They would treat Christ as a kind of symbol for certain imperishable ideals that may have been brought within our reach by Christ and have had their finest exemplification in Him, but which would remain ours even if historical criticism left us little more of Jesus than the name. As regards that, I have simply to say this, that if it be true, then for nineteen centuries men have been making a total mistake about Christianity; they have been mistaking a philosophy for a religion. But the unmistakable fact about Christianity is that it is a religion, a religion that centres round a person, and that person is the Lord Jesus Christ. However some may have looked at Him, declining to admit His title to divine honours, while they bowed to His spiritual insight and worth, still what has compelled their attention to Him is the fact that for millions He is God incarnate, God in human flesh, the object of their faith and worship.

[1] *Journal*, pp. 3, 147.

Christ occupies a position relatively to the Christian religion which is different from that of the founders of any other of the great world faiths. These are three—Judaism, Mohammedanism, and Buddhism. The founders of these, Moses, Mohammed, Buddha, significant as they were, spiritual geniuses as they were, are not indispensable to these religions. Their sublime thoughts, having once been projected into the minds of men, have acquired a relative independence and exercise what religious power there is in them irrespective of Moses or Mohammed or Buddha. But it is different with Christ. He has not merely projected new ideas about God and eternity into the minds of men; He has offered Himself to them as the object of their trust and service. He offered nothing to them dissociated from Himself. He is the potent factor in every truth He has brought near, transforming it from a cold formula into a living force.

Contrasting Christianity with these religions from another point of view, what the late Professor David Duff once said of Buddhism might with the same measure of truth be said of Judaism and of Mohammedanism. He said

'Buddhism is Christianity without Christ.' Isn't that true of Judaism? Isn't Judaism just the torso of God's perfect revelation, broken off, left with a hope unfulfilled, a divine promise never implemented? But promise of what? Hope of what? Of a Messiah—of Christ; of what we have in Christianity. Take Christ out of Christianity, and I doubt if you can do much better for your spiritual life than fall back on Judaism. Or Mohammedanism, is it not another phase of Christianity without Christ? Look at it historically. It arose among peoples who knew something of Judaism and Christianity. It was a vigorous and indignant protest of outraged spirituality, once enlightened, against a Christianity which was lapsing into idolatry and something very like polytheism. But in its revolt, ignoring the right of Jesus to the divine honour and place which had been accorded to Him and the enriching of the whole conception of God's nature that had been reached in and through Him, it had to be content with an arid idea of God, as unattractive as all that the Unitarian, who is logical, can offer. What saves Unitarianism, as we call it, is that it is not logical; is

the fact, pointed out in one of his essays by the late Dr. Martineau, that the object of Unitarian worship is not the First Person, but the Second Person, of the Trinitarian Trinity. In other words, Unitarians worship Christ without acknowledging the debt. But what is all this but to say that Mohammedanism is a phase of Christianity without Christ, in which we are left with a God of whom we know nothing very attractive for want of a Son to reveal Him. And to return to Professor Duff's statement, Buddhism is Christianity without Christ. He was thinking of its founder's sympathy with suffering, his anxiety to afford a way of redemption and to assure a future of blessedness. But what differentiates between Buddha and Christ is that while all the one could give is sympathy and advice, the other is an ever-living Saviour mighty to save. Take Christ, the living Saviour, away, however, and Christianity relapses into mere sympathy and advice, tender enough, but impotent. Christianity is powerless without Christ, a living, present Christ. For it is not merely the historical figure of Jesus that we need to clothe the idea of Messiah with definite features. It is the

living, eternal Lord, active as a Saviour, mighty to save in the world to-day. It is His presence that makes Christianity a power, not merely the fascinating memory of long ago. As that alone, He would be no more than Moses, Mohammed, and Buddha, and His religion be as decrepit and aged as theirs. But His living presence gives His religion eternal youth and vitality and recuperative power, of which, as history attests, in the struggle with the disintegrating and deadening forces of time—mammon, familiarity, and indolence—it is constantly and seriously in need.

A further glance at history brings home still more strongly the outstanding place of Christ in the religion which is linked with His name. What has been the subject as to which there has been the keenest scrutiny and inquiry, the question most urgently discussed throughout its career? Surely this—What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He? The earliest theological discussions to which council after council was summoned were on the proper answer to this question. Time after time Christ's supreme significance was obscured and overweighted within the Church by the super-

imposition of all sorts of alien inventions of Romanism,—ascetic practices, gorgeous ritual, worship of Virgin and saints, mass, confessional, the whole system of the Papacy. Protestantism also has not been without blame, and it has offered particular doctrines or elaborate creeds and confessions to men as essential to Christianity instead of Christ. But Christ Himself has ever reasserted Himself, and His rights have come to their own. Thomas à Kempis calls men back to the imitation of Christ. Francis of Assisi utters the same call in his own way. Dante and Michael Angelo utter it yet again. Luther in his turn carries men back to His feet. And in our day the cry has rung out once more 'Back to Christ,' and men eagerly turn. Why is this? What is the significance of this emergence of Christ from every form of cerement in which deliberately or unthinkingly men have wrapped Him and buried Him in His religion? Why is it that men are not content to turn away from Christianity as something effete and out of date, but rather turn, instead, to its fountain-head, clear the stream, and let it flow afresh? How is it that Christ is always able to reassert Himself,

revitalise His religion, and recover His supremacy in the hearts of men? That is a question well worth pondering if ever you are tempted to think Christianity's day is done. It is because He is what those who knew Him first recognised and proclaimed Him to be; He is what He asserted of Himself, the only begotten Son of God and God His Father. He is no dead hero of the Syrian lands, but the living Lord of the realms of light.

But lately this was forcibly brought home to me in this way. A friend went over to the church of Rome. I heard of it with regret and yet with a measure of satisfaction. Why satisfaction? What had been the history of that soul? The history of many like George J. Romanes, blinded by trusting to the light of reason alone, which, when heart and will are ignored, degenerates into little better than an affair of chop logic. Such turn to atheism, turn to agnosticism, turn to Unitarianism. But of each of these may be said what Romanes said of Unitarianism, it 'is only an affair of the reason—a merely abstract theory of the mind, having nothing to do with the heart, or

the real needs of mankind.'[1] These real needs, however, will assert themselves. And the unduly exalted reason having nothing to offer, men lose confidence in it altogether, and are glad to harbour in a refuge which purports to guarantee to them once more authority for faith in a living Saviour, Jesus Christ. God grant that under stress of weather they do not find out that in large measure their refuge is a refuge of lies! May they rather appropriate to themselves the Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Saviour, so fully, who, in spite of all its errors, is enshrined in the hearts of many, nominally in the hearts of all, within the Roman church, that no discovery of its many impostures will be able to shake their faith in Him! And it is because that is possible that, when a soul turns from Rationalism in any form even to the Roman church, an evangelical lover of the Lord feels that it has drawn nearer, not wandered farther away.[2]

Let us look at how those who first were drawn to His side thought of Christ. In the closing weeks of 1908 a remarkable book

[1] *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 165.

[2] Cf. Cuthbert C. Hall, *Universal Elements of the Christian Religion*, pp. 196 ff.

appeared by Professor Denney entitled *Jesus and the Gospel.* It has been hailed with acclaim as one of the most important books that have been written. And its importance lies not in its originality, but because with ripeness of knowledge, patience of scholarship, the calmness of a judge and the passion of one who would be a winner of souls for Christ, in it he sets himself to answer two questions: (1) What did the first disciples think of Christ? (2) Did their thought of Christ correspond with Christ's thought of Himself? To the first question his answer is an unequivocal assertion that one and all, when once they were convinced that the resurrection had taken place, leapt to the conviction that He was divine, that they gave Him in their hearts a place with God upon His throne, and worshipped and honoured Him even as they honoured the Father. He was to them the only begotten Son of God, their living, present, Lord and Saviour. To the second question, Did this thought of Christ correspond with Christ's thought of Himself, Professor Denney's answer is a deliberate and emphatic affirmative. It is backed up by appeal

to a score of characteristic and decisive words and deeds of Jesus, carefully sifted, gathering a cumulative force and overwhelming in their convincing strength. Follow the Professor's leading and you go to Paul, to Peter, to James, to John. You read Epistle and Gospel, Acts and Revelation. And you feel the quickened pulse-beat, when they speak of Christ. You hear the echo of hallelujahs in praise of His name. Then you go to the banks of the Jordan at the baptism, to the wilderness during the temptation, to the Mount to hear His manifesto, to His trial to hear Him on His defence. You listen and hear Him speak of Himself, all artlessly and naturally, as 'Son of Man,' as 'Christ,' as 'Son of God.' You hear Him summon men to His judgment seat, tell them their eternal destiny will be determined by their attitude to Him, and offer them forgiveness and unfailing succour if they trust in Him. What more could God say? Is this imposture? Is this insanity? Is this presumption and blasphemy? Or were the men who heard and reported these things right? This is none other than the Son of God. It is more than His sinlessness, more than His

perfect, peerless humanity that overpowers us. Of that we might say with Schiller, 'in the face of superiority and perfection, we have but one resource—to love them.' In the light of the experience of Jesus we may with shame be forced to add—'or to hate them.' But while we do love Jesus, that is far from saying all, far from expressing the deepest feeling. His nature towers above us; brother man though He be, He has an authority we cannot ignore or gainsay; and—we cannot help it—we fall at His feet and adore.

What does it mean? It means that He is felt to be more than an example, more than a teacher; He is the one to whom we are responsible. He is more than sympathiser, more than helper; He is the one on whom alone we depend for salvation.

In the matter of life this has been beautifully put in allegory by Professor Peabody.[1] He imagines a community who had wealth enough to acquire an organ, but none knew how to play it. And one tried his hand and fingered a few notes, and another, and another still. But one day a stranger came and touched it with a master hand, and they could

[1] *Mornings in the College Chapel.* Sec. Series, p. 198 ff.

hardly believe it was their instrument that could produce such effects. So with human life. What poor play with its powers of mind and heart and will had men made! What a puny thing it had appeared! One scarcely wonders that men had but meagre ideas of immortality once. Why should such a paltry thing survive? But Christ came, and lived a life, and showed us how to live. And what a great thing life seems now, since it has been touched by the Master hand! That is more than teacher, more than example; that is the Author of Life explaining and exhibiting the possibilities of His own high design and marvellous workmanship.

And He *is* the Saviour—present tense. We know of the need of more than pardon for the past on the score of Christ's sufferings. We feel we need a present salvation. For a present salvation we need a Saviour who is present. And that is what we find in Christ. He is Immanuel, God with us. The results He has achieved, the results that men are achieving in the power of His name, are nothing less than life from the dead, miracles more surprising than casting out of demons or

the raising of Lazarus from the tomb. Giving new life to dead souls; who can do that but God? And it is in Christ and through Christ that God still rescues the souls of men. Christ to-day lays His mighty spell on the vicious and the fallen, arrests the indifferent, and unmasks the man who was deceiving himself. Is it enough to classify him with Plato or Confucius, with Socrates or Seneca? What influence have they? No, no, of all the sons of men He stands alone, the living, active Saviour since ever He came among us unchecked by death, no mere memory, but a living, present friend. That is the faith of the Christian Church. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Paul had his own telling way of speaking about things, and when he wrote to the Colossians, he wrote to a people who were being assailed by teachers who were detracting from the peerless position of Jesus, while ostensibly doing Him homage, by welcoming Him to a lofty place among spiritual peers. No, thank you, says Paul. Compeers here are rivals. Jesus brooks no rival. He must stand alone. He is 'the image of the invisible God, the first-

born of every creature; by Him were all things created . . . and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.' And what He is in the universe in general He is also in the kingdom of the redeemed. 'He is the head of the body, the Church . . . the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence,' or as John says, 'that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.' In other words, as Dr. Orr expresses it in the title of his masterly volume, there is a 'Christian View of God and the World.' That is to say, there is a Christian view of God: but it is this, 'God was in Christ.' There is a Christian view of man: 'The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.' There is a Christian view of sin: 'God sending His own Son in the likeness of human flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.' There is a Christian view of salvation for man: 'The salvation which is in Christ.' There is a Christian view of prayer: prayer in the name of Christ. There is a Christian view of death and the Hereafter: to fall asleep in Jesus,' 'depart and be with Christ.' There is a Christian view of life: 'This is life eternal, to

know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.' At every point Christ enters. Take away Christ, the chief corner stone, and the whole fabric of Christian knowledge and faith falls to the ground. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. Without Him we are orphans; what we thought was the highest knowledge is an empty dream. For the Christian Christ is all and in all, Christ, the Son of Man, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, His Revealer, and our Saviour and Lord.

THE CROWNING FACT OF CHRISTIANITY—THE RESURRECTION

'The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared.'

LUKE xxiv. 34.

CHAPTER VI

THE CROWNING FACT OF CHRISTIANITY—THE RESURRECTION

DR. JOHN KER says somewhere, 'Christianity is the religion of revivals; pronounced dying or dead, it comes out into a higher life. It bears imprinted on it Resurrection.' That was a characteristic utterance of his, fraught with his unique insight and idealism. It justifies my speaking of the Resurrection of our Lord as the crowning fact in Christianity. When I say this, I do not mean to set up a comparison between, say, the incarnation and the death and the resurrection of our Lord as to their relative importance. It is a grave mistake ever to institute such a comparison. Incarnation, death, and resurrection of our Lord make up a whole whose importance for man is all equally great; and attention is inevitably diverted from this if, as is sometimes done, one

element is magnified at the expense of the others. When I say, therefore, that the Resurrection is the crowning fact, I am bearing that in mind and mean to suggest no comparison between the debt which we owe to Christ for joining the ranks of humanity, or suffering for men on the tree, and that which we owe Him for rising from the dead and coming again to reassure us with this good news. I regard these three as complementary, not competitive. It is to a historical fact that I am pointing when I speak of the Resurrection of our Lord as the crowning fact in Christianity. It was this fact that retrieved the situation after our Lord's death. It was this fact that recalled attention to Him immediately after the world thought that by putting Him to death it had rid itself of Him and the troublesome questions He raised, and the disciples thought that their fond hopes in Him were shattered for ever. The Resurrection immediately put its veto on such ideas and added new emphasis to the demand that the world must reckon with Jesus of Nazareth, because death, the common foe of other men, had not been able to keep any hold of Him.

1. The Resurrection is a well-attested fact.

It may be well, first of all, to refresh our memories on this matter. Here nothing is more instructive than the opening chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. In them, wherever you meet the apostles and the early disciples, they are full of one fact: Jesus the Crucified is risen from the grave. God hath raised Him from the dead. It is the great glad message they have to proclaim. It might well, and it did, spread consternation and terror among all who had had any share in compassing His death. But it put heart in His followers. They realised at once that they had been called and equipped for the very task of heralding this fact. We are witnesses, they said, of this very thing. They were men who had seen the empty tomb. They were men who had seen the Risen Lord. The evidence they had to submit was simply overwhelming. Nothing their opponents could advance could withstand their testimony. Thousands were convinced by its transparent truthfulness. All efforts to silence them were in vain. The stories started to refute them were traced to their source and exposed to public ridicule.

That bribe, for instance, to the soldiers, to say that the disciples stole the body while the guards slept! How could the guards know what happened if they were asleep! It was all futile. The Resurrection was accepted as a well-attested fact. On it the faith of the apostles found new sure ground for all they had already begun to think of Jesus. From the empty grave Christianity took its rise, and its whole history since is testimony that the men who proclaimed the Resurrection were neither deceivers nor deceived.

The evidence is so convincing, it has withstood so successfully all efforts to invalidate it, that one wonders why men do not give up that attempt. There is something marvellous in the ingenuity with which the attack is ever renewed, unwilling minds always seeking for some new shift by which to justify themselves for refusing to acknowledge Jesus as Risen Lord. But those who do so must forgive believers if they feel that there is that touch of shiftiness about the attempts to evade the evidence, and if they think in consequence that it is not want of evidence, but want of will, that explains the unbelief. There is no get-

ting away from the place which the Resurrection had as the immediate rallying-point of incipient Christianity. Harnack, no foe but friend, asserts it, but in doing so, he only repeats what has been said already by Keim, and Baur, and Strauss, as one after another they demolished each other's views to set up their own. The evidence for the belief in the Resurrection as a well-accredited fact goes back almost to the very day it occurred. Long before Matthew or Mark or Luke had penned a line, Paul, in his first Epistle to Corinth, where he was in 52 A.D., tells us what men already believed. What he speaks of was no new idea, but one well known and attested, and the men were still living of whom he spoke to challenge or refute him, if what he attributed to them was not true. No, no, Christianity is not credulous when it proclaims a Risen Lord. The credulity is with those who deny it. This is a well-attested fact, sifted at the time, and sifted many a time since, and just as little prejudiced now as then, make of it what men will.

2. What constitutes the gospel of the Resurrection?

The apostles regarded the news of the

Resurrection as good news, and called it so, Gospel. What is the Gospel of the Resurrection? Is it simply the fact that some one had come to life again from the dead? If so, then why was it not till Jesus arose that this made such a stir? Why was there no such excitement over the daughter of Jairus, the widow of Nain's son, or Lazarus of Bethany? Why did not Jesus Himself, on the score of what He had done for them, commence to speak of one or other of them, as His disciples did of Him after He rose from the dead? Why speak of Him as the first-born from the dead, and not one of them? The reason is not far to seek. It is personal. The Gospel of the Resurrection is that Jesus is risen. It is not the mere resurrection; it is the Person who is the Risen One. As Dr. Denney puts it, 'If the witnesses had asserted of Herod, or of any ordinary person, that he had risen from the dead, the presumptions would have been all against them.'[1] But there is a moral, just as there is a physical, fitness of things. No one is surprised if a leaden weight, cast into the sea, sinks to

[1] Dobschütz, *Ostern und Pfingsten*, 7 *et passim*; see also Denney, *Jesus and the Gospel*, p. 108 ff.

the bottom and remains there. But if this happens to a lifeboat or a lifebuoy, you want an explanation. Either of them may be submerged for a time, but you expect it to rise. So in the world of spirit. Is the resurrection of Jesus a miracle? Undoubtedly; but it would have been a greater miracle, if He had not risen. In the world of the supernatural to which He had proved Himself to belong, His resurrection is natural, not unnatural. It was the quiet perception of this congruity that led to ready credence of the report and of the evidence. This was why John, for instance, at the bare sight of the empty grave, leapt to the meaning of it, namely, that Jesus was risen. This was why the disciples had no difficulty in accepting the fact, when once the evidence broke the shell of unbelief begotten of grief, prostration, and dismay. This was why men eagerly accepted their testimony, and gave the assent of the unconscious testimony of their own hearts to the truth of what Peter said, 'It was not possible that He should be holden of death.' When they took time to think, when they allowed the great, gracious figure of the Jesus they had known to rise again before them and

reassert itself, they felt the incongruity between death and the grave and One so essentially alive. To think that He was alive once more, that His enemies had been foiled and death cheated of its prey, and that they would have Him back and the world enjoy again the blessings that had flowed from His gracious hands, though there had been nothing else to tell and the fact had carried no richer meaning, still, methinks, these men would have felt they had something they were entitled to call good news, a gospel, if they could assure men that Jesus had risen.

But justice is not done to what we call the Gospel of the Resurrection, if we do not remember that resurrection is used as a comprehensive term for the Ascension which followed and the ascended Lord's session at God's right hand. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that in speaking of the Risen Lord His followers thought not so much of the One who had returned to earth from the grave as of Him who was the living and ascended Saviour. Empty grave, appearances to the disciples, are chiefly of value because they afford tangible proof of the persistence of the

life and activity of the Lord in spite of death. From one point of view there was no occasion for the Lord's return to earth. Pentecost, the triumph of Christianity, are constant evidence that death had no dominion over Him, even had He never reappeared. Why, then, be so severe, you may ask, on those who have doubts about the reality of the physical appearances while willing to admit the spiritual realities? Was there any need for these appearances, and if not, is it not contrary to God's constant regard for the law of economy to suppose that they actually occurred or that what are described as miraculous appearances were any more than visions of the apostles' inner sense? That is fairly enough asked, but it disregards two things. It disregards the evident intention of those who told what they saw. It imputes to them what can only be called misrepresentation, for they mean to convey to men, are at pains to indicate, that it was no vision but reality they saw in the Risen Lord. Still more it disregards the actual situation. The disciples were utterly disconcerted, reduced to mental paralysis, by the crucifixion. And there was needed some strong, startling, yet

convincing demonstration to rally them, overcome their unbelief, re-awaken their faith. That was why Christ appeared. Every utterance of the Risen Lord bears that out. Indeed, had He not appeared, I question if Pentecost could ever have occurred for want of expectant witnesses to whom the Spirit might come or through whom He might act. There, then, was the gracious purpose of the appearances of the Lord. Only, the Risen Lord is not simply the Lord who once appeared, but the Ascended Lord who unseen is ever near.

3. But why is this called a Gospel?

To answer that a good deal depends on what is behind the question. There were many, of course, to whom the news that Christ was risen was most unwelcome. We know what consternation it produced in the breasts of all who had a share in His crucifixion. We know the pains they took to suppress the fact; by falsehood, by intimidation, by persecution. It convicted them of the darkest crime. Besides, according to the strange moral obliquity of the human heart, what was even a bitterer pill still as regards the Sadducees, for instance, was that it completely refuted their pet position,

that there is no resurrection. No wonder, according to the vivid translation in the Twentieth Century New Testament of Acts iv. 2, 'The Sadducees were much annoyed because . . . on the strength of the resurrection of Jesus, the apostles were preaching the resurrection of the dead.' It was an alarming thing, too, in the first instance, for all people to hear of a Risen Lord. It meant judgment, as Peter told his audiences in Jerusalem, and Paul his hearers in Athens. And if at Athens they were so morally insensate that they only mocked at the suggestion, at Jerusalem among a people who had a deeper sense of the reality of things, and where conscience counted for more than intellect, at the news they were pricked to the heart, and cried out in consternation, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' So far, certainly, this scarcely seems good news.

How well worthy of the name it is, however, what a cheering message to heavy hearts, soon appears when account is taken of all it guarantees.

(*a*) Think what the fact that He is risen from the dead means as regards Jesus of Naza-

reth Himself. It confirms all that men are induced to think of Him from the study of His life. Paul felt that. He puts it in his own pregnant way when he says that Jesus was powerfully—it may be translated, miraculously—declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead. Here is something that leaves no room for doubt about it. He had awakened this idea that He was the Son of God in the minds of men by the way He spoke and acted. He had claimed God as His Father and an intimacy with Him as His Son that was quite different from anything any mere man without blasphemous presumption could pretend to. He had sealed His own death warrant rather than abate that claim by one iota. But no miraculous power of His own, no Elias sent from heaven, had intervened to save Him from the Cross. Was He then a proved impostor? Till the third day men might have thought so. But on the third day God raised Him from the dead, and thus, in terms more emphatic than at the baptism or on the Transfiguration Mount, declared, 'This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' The Resurrection completely cancels every

damaging implication of the Cross. It is the crowning proof of the divinity of our Lord.

More than that; we shall have occasion to consider later at full length all that the Cross stands for as the means of salvation. So it will be enough here, but it is necessary, to note that the Resurrection is the divine attestation of the worth of the sacrifice offered on Calvary. He was delivered for our offences; but He was raised again for our justification.

Let us pause here for a moment just to put the thing in the opposite way. When considering Christ's relation to Christianity we imagined what Christianity might be without Christ. Paul does the same thing with reference to the Resurrection. What would Christ be without His resurrection? Where would we be with a Christ who has not risen? If Christ be not risen, we are false witnesses of God; our preaching is vain; our faith is vain; we are yet in our sins; they also that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished; we are of all men most miserable. In other words, as one has put it, an incarnation consummated in a death uncrowned by resurrection confronts us with 'the vanity of preaching . . . the empti-

ness of belief . . . the falsehood of testimony . . . the failure of redemption . . . the collapse of hope.'[1] This is enough to stagger us if tempted to belittle the Resurrection.

(*b*) But look at the Resurrection more particularly as it affects us. Jesus says to a grief-smitten woman to ease her pain, 'Thy brother shall rise again.' 'I know,' she says wearily, listlessly, 'I know he shall rise again at the Resurrection.' 'I am the Resurrection and the Life,' He rejoins, as a very flash of light divine, not only to rally her hopes, but for all time. What bathos if thereafter He Himself had never risen! But with a Risen Lord, we feel that this is amply justified. We have met Him who hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. That is to say, the resurrection of Christ is the guarantee to men of the legitimacy of the instinct for immortality and the assurance of a future life and all that that means to men.

The resurrection of Christ as a well-attested fact really supersedes every other argument

[1] C. C. Hall, *The Universal Elements in the Christian Religion*, p. 171.

for belief in immortality. Every other argument, from Plato to Robert Browning and Alfred Tennyson, is after all only a speculation, an appeal to probability. The result may be a lofty and calm gaze forward, but on the other hand, it may utterly fail to carry conviction and only leave men in deeper distress. Without Christ the outlook into the future may be only a troubled, anxious foreboding and misgiving. It may be indifference; or it may be the pathetic levity of the dying lancer that calls for 'six jolly young lancers and six brandies and sodas to drink to the buffer below'; or it may be the despair, which John Morley nicknamed 'courage to tell ourselves that we have no perfect . . . bliss to promise ourselves, in other words, that the black and horrible grave is the end of our communion, and that we know one another no more.'[1] Without Christ and His resurrection, are not death and the something after death rightly named by Hamlet 'the undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveller returns'? But Christ is the Traveller who has crossed the bourn, explored the country, and after three days has returned. His is a

[1] J. Morley, *Rousseau*, i. p. 219.

glorious report, full of inspiration and reassurance for all who love and trust Him, for all who have forsaken the ways of sin, have passed through the gate of repentance, have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and are walking by faith in His footsteps. 'Let not *your* heart be troubled. . . . In My Father's house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.' How calming, how soothing, how comforting these words sound to many a weary ear! But why? Because Jesus has done as He said He would do. All the comfort of them was blotted out from the hearts of the men to whom they were actually spoken—they had turned to seem but a ghastly infatuation, the empty promise of a good but misguided soul—by the day after they were uttered, for by that time He hung a crucified felon between two thieves. And so it continued till the third day. But then what a transformation! Jesus rose again from the dead, having opened the Kingdom of Heaven for all believers. And it is to Him and to His

rising from the dead and appearing again among men, alive, and the possessor of life over which death had no permanent control, life which He imparts to all who trust Him, that the world owes any conclusive evidence for the existence, nature, and reality of a world of life to come beyond the grave.

It is important to emphasise this debt. The civilised world has grown so familiar with this idea, has come in the main so much to take it for granted, regards it so much as its own, that it forgets that it ever was without it, forgets that there was a day when all it possessed was dark surmises, forgets that where the news of Christ has not yet come men are in as gross darkness or glimmering twilight still, forgets that it owes it all to Christ. Now it thinks it knows all about it, is sure of the future, can dispense with a Risen Christ, and is at liberty to challenge with the Revealer the terms on which the heaven He has revealed may be enjoyed. As it was once put in a telling, though rough and ready way, by a street preacher: 'You are all glad to know of and want to enjoy the Bible heaven; but you object to enter it by the Bible way.' Indeed,

one may go further, and say, 'All want a Heaven, but many cavil at both the nature and the way of the Bible heaven.' But the fact is the only heaven of which we know, of whose existence we have any certainty or guarantee, but of which we have in Christ evidence that has proved incontestible, is the Bible, the Christian, heaven, and the evidence for its existence, its nature, and the conditions of its enjoyment, is all of a piece, hangs together, and depends on the one grand Witness, Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord. You cannot pick and choose here. 'He that believeth on the Son hath life; He that believeth not the Son shall never see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him.'

Here, then, is the good news, the Gospel of the Resurrection. It proclaims the Risen Christ—'He that liveth, and was dead, and is alive for ever more, hath the keys of death and hell.' He is the Conqueror of sin and death and the devil. And whether we stand convicted by the knowledge of sin, dismayed at the gates of the grave, or terror smitten by the fear of temptation, there stands He, risen from the grave, saying, 'Fear not: I am risen:

I have borne the burden of sin, and borne it away; I have entered the domain of death, robbed death of his crown, and burst the bars of his prison house; I have encountered the Evil One in his subtlest temptations, and shown him that even his mightiest threat of death for those who resist him need not appal; trust in Me.' That is the ultimate source of confidence in life and in death. That is the power of His resurrection. And the man who knows it and has a right to it is the Christian. His heart's ease depends on the Resurrection; and that is the gospel the Resurrection brings.

THE SYMBOL OF CHRISTIANITY—THE CROSS

'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.'—GAL. vi. 14.

CHAPTER VII

THE SYMBOL OF CHRISTIANITY—THE CROSS

CHRISTIANITY is the religion of the Cross. Its subject matter is called the Cross. Its Author and Lord is the incarnate, risen, and exalted Son of God who died upon the Cross. Its aim, salvation, is accomplished through the Cross. The Cross is the outstanding symbol of Christianity. That is so familiar that it stirs no surprise in us. But read 'Gallows' for Cross, and how does the case stand? 'Christianity is the religion of the Gallows. Its subject matter is called the Gallows. Its Author and Lord is the Son of God who died on the Gallows. Its aim, salvation, is accomplished through the Gallows. The Gallows is the outstanding symbol of Christianity.' How does that strike you? It is the mere accident that a cross to which criminals were nailed, and not a gallows on which they were

hanged, was the Roman instrument for inflicting a capital sentence on the basest and most execrated of Rome's criminals, that these are not the terms in which we should speak, and the Cross and not the Gallows its equivalent is the symbol of our faith.

The Cross took its place immediately in the preaching of Christianity. Men instantly perceived its deep significance, and transformed the engine of death into its most sacred symbol. Its power was speedily seen as men went everywhere preaching the Cross. In the worship of the Church the majesty of the Cross was exalted, and the very first aberrations into idolatry were due to misguided zeal to magnify the Cross. Men devoted their genius to unfold its beauty. They built their churches in the form of the Cross. They adorned their walls with paintings of its scenes. A Protestant like Albrecht Dürer vied with a Romanist like Fra Angelico in depicting its spiritual significance. Musicians, Palestrina, Handel, Bach, Wagner, sang their sweetest music over the Passion on the Cross. Men betook themselves to lives of torture and hardship to repeat the rigours

of the Cross. And the devoutest souls of Christendom sought to penetrate to the mystic depths of the Sanctuary of Sorrow whose Holy of Holies was the Cross.

What is the meaning of this? Why is this place given within Christianity to the Cross? It is for two reasons. The one is what is vividly suggested by the Cross itself: the other is the victim in whom Christianity is chiefly interested who suffered upon the Cross. The Cross stands for two things. It stands for the proper fate of the worst of evil doers. It stands also for the common fate of devoted saviours of their kind. No wonder the Cross should find a prominent place in a religion whose aim is the salvation of sinful men.

But it is Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified, who gives supreme significance to the Cross. But for Him it would never have received attention; everything turns on Him. It was a bold, God-inspired venture of faith when Peter, from mere familiar intercourse with the man Jesus, declared Him the Christ, the Son of the living God. The Resurrection was God's own attestation that men had read aright the signs they saw in Jesus. But what

about the enigma of His death, His death on the Cross? When faith reflected on who He was, and received God's testimony to His worth, it saw immediately that if once the meaning of that death were realised, nothing else could mean so much for men as that. And with the light of its meaning breaking in ever greater brilliance around them Paul in an ecstasy burst forth in the words, 'God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross.' It was its double significance of shame and salvation, elements so signally blended in the experience of the Lord, that made the Cross at once draw and repel. As the poet puts it:

> 'This that killed Thee, kissed Thee, Lord.
> Touched Thee, and we touch it: dear,
> Dark it is; adored, abhorred:
> Vilest, yet most sainted here.
> Red of heat, O white of heat,
> In it hell and heaven meet.'[1]

Taking the Cross, then, as the symbol of Christianity, and remembering that, for the Christian, it derives all its significance from Him who suffered upon it, let us consider the outstanding points to which it directs our attention.

[1] George Meredith, *The Song of Theodolinda.*

1. The Cross of Christ, first of all, witnesses to the completeness of the divine understanding of, and the intensity of the divine sympathy with, human suffering and sorrow.

In one of his sonnets in the *Vita Nuova*, Dante distils the essence of sympathy into these two lines. Speaking of one who offered him comfort in his great grief over the death of Beatrice, he says,

> 'Our life revives, since one doth now console
> Who sorrows with us, *healing grief with grief*.'[1]

That goes to the heart of things. The sympathy that we feel to be most real is that which has behind it a kindred experience, can heal grief with grief. Remember, then, who suffered upon the Cross. It was God incarnate, God in human flesh. Remember the sufferings and the shame of the passion week which culminated in the Cross. They meant the physical pains of scourging and nailing to the tree; the nervous strain of sleepless hours, amid the anxiety of suspicion and treachery; the shock of defection by trusted friends; the shame of public insult and exposure; the agony of soul and desola-

[1] Sonnet xxxix., Frances de Mey's translation.

tion of spirit endured in Gethsemane and voiced in the cry from the Cross, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Remember that the Father gave up the Son to suffer all this for us. At present I do not ask the reason why these sufferings were endured. But are they not the guarantee to us that God knows by experience what human suffering is, knows what bereavement is, and can feel for the creatures He has made?

This is part of the secret of the triumph of Christianity. When it came on the stage of the world, mankind was searching for some resource against disaster and woe. Christianity soon met two conspicuous rivals which are types of many. These were the stoicism of Epictetus and the worship of Mithra. Both succumbed before the message of the Cross. Why? Dr. Edwin A. Abbott in his tale *Silanus the Christian* vividly tells why Epictetus failed. It was for lack of sympathy with sorrow. He describes a young student, harassed at the moment by the disasters that had fallen on his father, listening to a lecture from Epictetus. In it, all unconscious of his student's anxiety, the lecturer waives concern about the woes

of others out of court as something that need not disturb inward peace. 'I have nothing to do with my father,' he said, 'but only with the supreme good.' At such callousness the lad burst from the room, returned to challenge the teacher for his inhumanity, repudiated his teaching, and leaving Epictetus overwhelmed with a sense of the failure of his philosophy, turned to Christ, who sympathised with human woe.[1] The worship of Mithra was another rival. Its deity was a saviour god, whose great feat for man's salvation was the strenuous and successful pursuit and slaughter of the Wild Bull, through whose death alone could blessings come to men. This involved hardships such as appealed to Rome's soldiers, and Mithraism was the popular religion among them, because it rated strength above gentleness, and preferred courage to lenity.[2] But when the decisive battle of the Milvian Bridge was fought which gave Constantine the empire, and settled which was to be the religion of the Roman world, the symbol on the imperial standard with the dream-taught inscription, τουτῳ νικα, 'In

[1] *Op. cit.*, chapter 28.
[2] Cumont, *Mysteries of Mithra*, p. 142.

this conquer,' was not the taurochthonous Mithra, but the mystic cross, the ☧, the initials of Christ's name so interlaced as to prefigure the Cross and Him who suffered upon it. True, Constantine spoke of this as the symbol of valour, and none can ever belittle the valour of Christ's dying. But the conquering touch was elsewhere, namely, in the sympathy with human suffering and sorrow, and in something deeper still, the bearing of the burden of men's sin.

Ah, that touch of sympathy! how it tells! Men as little in line with orthodox Christianity as John Morley and Thomas Carlyle do not fail to appreciate this in Christianity. Carlyle moralises on the fate of Marie Antoinette. Where must she look for consolation when, on the way to the guillotine, every heart was steeled against her? What do you think he says? 'Think not of these; think of Him whom thou worshippest, the Crucified—who also treading the winepress alone, fronted sorrow still deeper; and triumphed over it, and made it holy; and built of it a "Sanctuary of Sorrow" for thee and all the wretched.'[1] And John Morley, contrasting Deism with

[1] *Miscellaneous Essays*, v. 165.

Christianity, sets Deism aside in these terms: 'It does not incorporate in the very heart of the religious emotion the pitifulness and sorrow which Christianity first clothed with the associations of sanctity, and which can never henceforth miss their place in any religious system to be accepted by men. Why? Because a religion that leaves them out, or thrusts them into a hidden corner, fails to comprehend at least one half, and that the most touching and impressive half, of the most conspicuous facts of human life.'[1]

Christianity brings into the very forefront the great welling sympathy in the heart of God with the woes of His children. God revealed this as nowhere else when Jesus died upon the Cross. And the Cross symbolises this in Christianity.

2. Christianity, for a second thing, bears unswerving testimony to God's absolute antagonism to sin. And the Cross is the symbol of that.

Men knew what they meant by condemning a man to the Cross. It was the brand of their utter execration on what they believed to be

[1] *Rousseau*, ii. 270.

his way of life. They meant that they had tracked the dark doings which they utterly abhorred to their lair, and they now dragged them into the light of day; and the miscreant who had gloated over them they nailed up upon the Cross as though to say, 'Behold a pest-infested wretch that would pollute the earth were he to remain longer upon it. Let him die the most painful and shameful of deaths.' And however often justice might miscarry, the innocent suffer, or the victim be a martyr for a holy cause which misguided men failed to recognise, yet the Cross was a human testimony against sin, expressed what man in his inmost conscience knew every sin deserved. God endorsed that judgment. It was a God-given instinct that looked with unrelenting eyes on wickedness.

'Yes,' you say, 'and had Christianity only told of the fate of the two thieves that would have been quite intelligible, though perhaps that would scarcely have warranted the making of the Cross its symbol. But Christ who suffered there was innocent. It was a great miscarriage of justice, the greatest that ever befell on earth. And the Cross is only the

Christian symbol because He hung upon it. What has this to do with sin and the divine condemnation of sin, unless to expose for ever its sense of the limitless madness and folly of which mankind is capable.'

Well, it does that, but it does more. Come away with me to the banks of the Jordan. See great crowds there thronging to John to be baptized of him, and as he baptizes them, confessing their sins in that baptism unto repentance. Among them stands Jesus of Nazareth. He, too, approaches the Baptist to be baptized, but John remonstrates, for he feels somehow that a baptism unto repentance is not for such as He. Can we read the mind of Christ and what led Him to that step? Was it not the very consciousness, the very impulse that brought Him into human flesh at all? Let a son, a daughter, a brother, a sister, fall on evil ways. A true-hearted father or mother, brother or sister, feels the sin and the shame as if it were his own. There is a great fact called human solidarity. We are members of one body, and if one member goes wrong all the others suffer with it, cannot escape; personal worth is no protection. And Christ had become

a member of this sin-smitten race. He might, He did, avoid all personal participation in its evil ways. But if He went into the waters of baptism, it was because He acknowledged the sin of the race to which He belonged, sin in which therefore He was involved, and He consecrated Himself to save them. And when He suffered on the Cross, submitted to death and all that led up to death there—submitted, I say, for we must never forget that while men worked their wicked will upon Him, it was only by His permission, 'no man taketh My life from Me: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again'—it was just because on man's behalf He acquiesced in this way in God's judgment upon sin. Sin is hateful; sin must be stigmatised; and nothing could more emphatically express God's judgment upon it than the death of the very Son of God when He had identified Himself with this sinful race, even if the deed was also the very climax of their heartless wickedness, and the Cross the symbol of unrequited love as truly as of inexorable hatred against sin.

3. But if this were all we had to say, the Cross would only be a horror, and God a

darker enigma. And I must add that Christianity points us to the Cross to show the lengths to which God was willing to go, in order to provide free salvation for men from the sin which He so utterly abhorred and condemned and from the fate in which it must otherwise involve them.

Simply to share men's suffering and to share men's doom, if it cannot be redemptive, is only tragic. But the human heart has always had the conviction that in certain hands such sharing of suffering and doom can be redemptive. It may be so in the case of the innocent. It may be so for all for whom the innocent stands, for all with whom he is in touch. If one could appear in touch with all humanity animated by a love wide enough, he could stand for them all. But this is to ask for the coming of God, and a divine sacrifice. Yet men imagined that even that might be. To say nothing of the whole testimony of the Old Testament, Æschylus thought there was hope for Prometheus, if

> 'Some God should come to bear his woes
> And pass to Hades' sunless realm,
> And the dark cloudy depths of Tartarus.'[1]

[1] *Prometheus Vinctus*, p. 1049 ff.

Sophocles knew the power of love to save. Œdipus in his misery, seeking for deliverance from the fate that his unconscious sin had brought upon him cries,

> 'One soul working in the strength of love
> Is mightier than ten thousand to atone.'[1]

Atonement, sacrifice, with all that it involved of substitution and propitiation, all that it expressed of submission, restitution, plea for pardon, was the method to which mankind instinctively betook itself to get rid of the burden on the conscience which we call the sense of guilt. And the significant historical fact, as Harnack points out,[2] is that, with the death of Christ on the Cross, for His followers all other sacrifice has ceased. Why? Because they have found in His death there all that sacrifice meant, all that was true in it, what it is supposed to achieve, redemption from sin. There remaineth no more offering for sin, for He hath offered the perfect sacrifice once for all. There was the perfect intermediary, one with the human race, able to offer the perfect sacrifice which was His own perfect life, even up to the severest

[1] *Œdipus Coloneus*, p. 498.
[2] *Das Wesen des Christenthums*, p. 99.

demand of death rather than sin, death rather than let men perish in sin, Priest and Victim one, and all availing because of His divine equipment, the power of an endless life. As Sabatier says, 'The suffering of the Servant of Jehovah, in whom is no iniquity, cannot be the chastisement of His own crimes; it will henceforth be accepted as the necessary part that fraternal solidarity imposes on the best for the redemption of the rest.'[1]

Now the Cross is the symbol of all that. It says that it was a true instinct in the human heart which said atonement was needed before we could be forgiven. It was a true instinct which said that one must die for the many, the innocent for the guilty, if they were to be saved, and which realised that there was something in the very constitution of humanity—no mere legal fiction—that made this possible. But it also supplies the answer to the challenge and the fear. To the fear that there was no one equal to the task, it offers the Son of God. To the challenge 'why was atonement necessary?' the question 'is not pardon free?' it offers the suffering Son of God. Reflect on that, it says,

[1] *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, p. 131.

God's own Son on the Cross, and answer your own question. Forgiveness, salvation, is free. All that Christ asked of the world to save it was a Cross on which to die, as Lamennais says. For the rest it is free, free to any who will accept it, free to any who will trust Him. But the sight of Him dying on the Cross there tells us what forgiveness cost God. When will we learn that any forgiveness worth the name is not an easy sway of mind, that costs the forgiver no more than it costs the one freely forgiven? One who wrongs another never can quite know what it costs the friend he has wronged to forgive him. And it is only at the Cross, when we see the Son of God dying for our sins that we get a glimpse of what sin means to God, and what suffering is imposed on Him if He is to forgive it. Why? May not He, the Supreme, do as He pleases? Yes, but He has to think of us, of a holy law flouted by us, of what we are to think of it, and how we are to bear ourselves to Him, in the days to come. If we were nothing to Him, if the wrong we do to Him in every sin were nothing to Him, it would cost Him nothing to forgive. But just because we are dear to Him,

our sin broke His heart. Just because He loves us as intensely as He hates sin,

> 'Loved so well because He hated,
> Hated wickedness that hindered loving,'[1]

He had to reveal that love, not in words only, for words always fail when love is in hand, but in a great, unmistakable act, that death on the Cross which we say redeemed us, *i.e.* bought us back, for it lets us see what it cost God to forgive and save.

Let me quote a word that says much about the meaning of the Cross. 'Reason cries, "If God were good, He could not look upon the sin and misery of man and live; His heart would break." The Church points to the Crucifixion and says, "God's heart did break." Reason cries, "Born and reared in sin and pain as we are, how can we keep from sin? It is the Creator who is responsible; it is God who deserves to be punished." The Church kneels by the Cross and whispers, "God takes the responsibility; and bears the punishment." Reason cries, "Who is God? What is God? The name stands for the unknown. It is blasphemy to say we know Him." The Church

[1] Browning, *One Word More*.

kisses the feet of the dying Christ, and says, "We must worship the majesty we see."[1] The only criticism on that beautiful utterance is, that it is not reason that speaks as reason is represented here, but unreason and cavil and pride and sin at bay. Reason is humble and learns at the Cross the solution of many a mystery, but also that there are mysteries like the overcoming of sin which the heart gratefully welcomes and accepts, but which human reason cannot fully fathom or understand. It learns the mystery of the Cross.

4. There is still another side of Christianity, of which the Cross is the symbol. It is the symbol of the life which the Christian is to live.

Before ever His own cross was set up Christ said, 'Whosoever will be My disciple, must take up his cross and follow Me.' When He said this, it was simply a very vivid figure that could not fail in its message to men who knew too well the methods of a Roman execution. It meant to say that even if following Christ involved a way through life whose only parallel

[1] *Christus Futurus*, p. 371 ff., *cf.* a singularly fine passage in Law's *Tests of Life*, p. 178.

for crushing burden and scorn was to be found in that of a man on his way to execution with his cross on his back, a true disciple must be prepared for it. If loyalty to Christ meant the uncomplaining acceptance of imposition, misrepresentation, ingratitude, and cruelty, the true Christian must not shrink. But how enormously intensified is the force of the words when Jesus has to the very letter borne the Cross along the 'Dolorous Way,' and died on the Cross for men! In the light of that we understand what Amiel says: 'The Cross is the guarantee of the Gospel, therefore it has been its standard.'[1]

Everybody knows the story of St. Francis and the stigmata, *i.e.* the reproduction on his hands and feet of the marks of Christ. The legend is that as a mark of special favour to him for his saintliness this distinction was conferred on him by his Saviour. The legend is told of others besides St. Francis, and is all the outcome of a mistaken reading of the verse where Paul says of himself, 'I bear in my body the marks, stigmata, of the Lord Jesus.' However sceptical we may be of the tale of St.

[1] *Journal*, p. 168.

Francis, it is worth our while to listen to the prayer to which the coming to him of the marks of the Cross are supposed to be an answer. This is it. 'O my Lord Jesus Christ, I pray Thee grant me two graces before I die: the first, that in my life-time I may feel in my soul and in my body, so far as may be, the pain that Thou, sweet Lord, didst bear in the hour of Thy most bitter passion; the second is, that I may feel in my heart, as far as may be, that exceeding love wherewith Thou, O Son of God, wast kindled to willingly endure such agony for us sinners.'[1] That is a prayer all might aspire to pray. It is a prayer to enter into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. It is the desire to understand something of God's sorrow over sin and of His eagerness to save souls. To have it answered, however, would not be to discover marks of nail-prints or spear-thrust on palm or side, but to catch the inspiration of the Cross, to understand the use of suffering as a saving power, and, despising the shame, to be ready to endure any hardship or loss with joy in the service of our fellows or for the glory of our God. For as one has said,

[1] *Little Flowers of St. Francis*, p. 191.

'The Cross of Christ is composed of many other crosses—is the centre, the type, the essence of all crosses. We must suffer with Christ whether we believe in Him or not. We must suffer for the sins of others as for our own; and in this suffering we find a healing and purifying power and element. This is what gives to Christianity in its simplest and most unlettered form its force and life. Sin and suffering for sin; a sacrifice, itself mysterious, offered mysteriously to the divine Nemesis or law of sin, dread, undefined, unknown, yet sure and irresistible, with the iron necessity of law. This the Platonic Socrates did not offer; hence his failure and the success of the Nazarene.'[1]

The more it is pondered, the more the power of Christianity is found to lie in the Cross. The incarnate Christ, the risen and exalted Christ, and all His mysterious presence among us and experiences in our midst, become intelligible when we find Him acting for us and upon us by His death on the Cross, acting in us and through us by awakening in us the very spirit that led Him to the Cross. Of course the

[1] J. H. Shorthouse, *John Inglesant*, p. 259.

Cross does not say all. It is but a symbol, and no symbol can. But 'the very power of a symbol lies in the sublime inadequacy and yet practical effectiveness of its suggestion.'[1] And this symbol is associated so intimately with the great critical, crucial event in the Saviour's work for the world's salvation, that we are not surprised that the Gospel is called the word of the Cross. The Cross symbolises the service He did for us. It symbolises the nature of the service He expects of us. And if it reminds us that the ideal life for man is no smooth, easy progress over carpeted tracks, but strenuous, arduous, often wrestling with things repellent and cruel, it tells us, too, that Christ asks nothing of His followers harder than He has faced for them of His own gracious will, for

'Not in soft speech is told the earthly story,
Love of all Loves, that showed Thee for an hour.
Shame was thy Kingdom, and reproach thy glory,
Death Thine Eternity, the Cross Thy Power.'[2]

[1] Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art*, p. 183.
[2] Myers, *St. Paul*, p. 30.

THE IDEAL RELATIONSHIP IN CHRISTIANITY— SONS OF GOD

'How shall I put thee among the children?'—JER. iii. 19.

'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God. . . . Beloved, now are we children of God.'—1 JOHN iii. 1, 2.

CHAPTER VIII

THE IDEAL RELATIONSHIP IN CHRISTIANITY —SONS OF GOD

CHRISTIANITY is a revelation in Christ of the God of salvation and of the salvation of God. It is the history of how God made man, of what man made of himself, of what feelings this excited in God's heart, and of what measures God took and what lengths He went to retrieve the situation. The result for man is described in a great variety of ways. What has been called Christ's programme of Christianity puts it in one way. It is healing for broken hearts, release for captives, sight for the blind, liberty for them that are bruised, the acceptable year of the Lord. The Beatitudes put it in another. It is blessedness, and that guaranteed even in the most unlikely situations and for the most unexpected persons—the poor in spirit, the meek, the hungry and thirsty, the persecuted. Ex-

perience, Christian experience, describes it as finding in Christ wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. It is the realising of the enjoyment of an unchallengeable position, predetermined by God,—'whom He did foreknow, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son; and whom He foreordained, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.' You may call the result of God's efforts on man's behalf justification, or his reinstatement in his proper relation with God. You may call it sanctification, or the generation and development of the character that should correspond to this. But all of these simply describe different aspects or stages of the one grand result, and no one of them is more important than another. No one of them describes it in its entirety. The result that God aimed at and achieved through the work of His Son among men and upon the Cross was the restoration of man to his original and ideal relationship with Himself, namely, that of a son with his Father. If you ask me for a theological name for the process, the word I

like best is adoption. But I am not concerned about a theological term. I prefer it in picture as it is given by Christ in His matchless parable of the returning prodigal. All the shame-struck, conscience-smitten penitent dare venture ask for is forgiveness and a servant's place. But the father will not listen to it; 'Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry, for this, my son, was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found.' It is so much more than forgiveness, or even forgiving and forgetting, and a magnificent blotting out of the past. In Christ, God

'. . . takes away
Our sin and gives us righteousness instead.'[1]

It is even more than that. God reinstates the man who accepts His offers of salvation in the old relationship of a child of God. It was from that man fell; it is to that he is restored by the work of Christ our Saviour. That is the most comprehensive way of speaking of the result achieved by Christ. Every-

[1] A. H. Clough, *Mari Magno, the Clergyman's Tale.*

thing else finds its place within the scope of the restoration of this fundamental relationship.

It is this relationship which it is now proposed to study. From what has already been said in previous chapters of the measures taken by God to redeem the human race from its fate, there is no need to demonstrate the fatherly attitude of God toward men. None but a father, one bound to men by closer ties than merely those of Creator and Creature, one who was linked to them rather by ties like those of kindred and affection, would alone take such pains to save them. What men do need to study is their own position. They need to be clear in what sense and on what terms they are children of God; how much it means and what it involves; how far the figure goes. For even here we must remember that our language is still figurative. Father and son are figurative expressions, the best words in human speech to describe how we should stand with God. And yet they must be used just as our Lord and His apostles have taught us to use them, and not as covering any or every deduction or inference from them which we might be prepared to draw, unless it has their sanction.

1. The first thing to be said about this relationship is that men become sons of God in the highest sense of the term, not by nature, but by grace. They are not born to it, but born again. As the late Professor Robertson Smith says, 'In Christianity . . . God-sonship is not a thing of nature but a thing of grace.'[1]

There is a certain sense in which we may be called sons of God by nature. On the basis of our creation at His hand, and of the kind of nature, in a measure like His own, which He has given us, men may be spoken of as God's offspring. Indeed, Paul quotes the phrase of the old Greek poet Cleanthes, 'We also are His offspring,' and uses it as an argument from which to infer something as to the nature of God. It was an old belief, common to the Semitic stock, to which the Hebrews belonged, and to the Greek, that men were originally descended from the gods, or if not all men, some favoured families, or royal lines. And in the account of man's origin in the book of Genesis we have enough to give colour to that way of speaking.

[1] *Religion of the Semites*, p. 42.

There is an inclination, however, to treat that as if it covered everything, as if it constituted an inherent right on the part of all men without much ado to everything that is suggested by the name 'children of God.' Great zeal is manifested for the truth of its correlative, the universal fatherhood of God. If Father at all, can He be other than Father to all His children? Can there be step-bairns in God's family? Questions like these are supposed to be unanswerable and final. And this is supposed to be decisive of the problem of man's ultimate status and well-being. What is not so satisfactory, however, in this connection, is the languid interest so many of those who make most of it take in the duties which God-sonship imposes. There is not the same zeal to live and to urge others to live as becomes children of God. The fatherhood and sonship are chiefly thought of as something to which recourse may be had to reassure oneself that the prodigal after all will escape the worst consequences of his misdoings, no matter how he has lived. It thus becomes a very immoral doctrine and a subtle encouragement to loose and careless living. It is not the Bible con-

ception of the rights of man as child of God.

The Bible, indeed, never makes very much of that merely creational fatherhood and childhood. Even in the Old Testament where Israel is spoken of as God's son, it holds that position as the result of special selective grace. And the essence of the relationship is not something physical but ethical. The kinship is kinship of spirit, an entering into and understanding of the mind and plans of God. The Bible regards man in general as having forfeited any natural rights of sonship by sin. If God's fatherly love persists, it is all of divine grace and condescension. So far as mankind are concerned they have made themselves outcasts. By sin man has put his spirit quite out of touch with God, and as Bacon says 'If man be not of kin to God by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature.'[1] Nothing could be more emphatic than what Henry Drummond says of the soul severed from God by sin, nothing that more utterly shatters the figment of any sonship worth the name apart from grace. 'The soul, in its highest sense, is

[1] Bacon's Essays, *Of Atheism*.

a vast capacity for God . . . but without God it shrinks and shrivels until every vestige of the divine is gone, and God's image is left without God's spirit. One cannot call what is left a soul; it is a shrunken, useless organ, a capacity sentenced to death by disuse, which droops as a withered hand by the side, and cumbers nature like a rotted branch.'[1] If that is what sin has reduced man to at the very centre of his personality, God may remain Father still, but man is no more worthy to be called His son. It was as such he became a problem to God. God's question arose, how shall I put thee among the children. Richard Cameron's comment on this question in his very first sermon preached under the open sky among the descendants of the Border reivers is illuminative of its bearing on all the sinful sons of men. 'How shall I put thee among the children? put you among the children,' he said, 'the offspring of robbers and thieves.'[2] The mission of Christ was the answer. 'To as many as received Him, to them gave He power—or the right—to become

[1] *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, p. 110.
[2] Smellie, *Men of the Covenant*, p. 268.

children of God, even to them which believe on His name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man —a careful and exhaustive exclusion of all merely physical or natural relationship—but of God.' And nothing brings out more strikingly the purely gracious and spiritual relationship for which the name of sonship stands, than John's note of glad, almost incredulous surprise, when he announces the fact: 'Behold! —behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God, and—and he means, and yet—and yet such we are': that 's what we are.

Paul's way of telling how it comes about makes all this very plain. He speaks of the process as adoption. We scarcely appreciate the strength of the phrase. It meant so much more to a Roman than it does to us. It meant a complete break with the family ties established by nature, and the establishment of equally intimate ties with the family into which the man was legally introduced. Adoption was like a death and a second birth. John indeed uses all the language of birth

and begetting to describe the origin of the new relationship between the soul redeemed by Christ, in whom Christ's great work takes effect. It is life He gives, life generated by God, and its possessor is called a child of God. There are two Greek words corresponding to our child and son. The one suggests the vital relationship; the other suggests the dignity and privileges and obligations of the position. Both are used to describe the position of a man who by Christ's good offices has been reinstated in his right relationship with God. He is child of God and son of God. To what more glorious, more blessed position, could the heart of man aspire?

2. The second thing to be said about this subject is that the type of sonship is embodied in Jesus Christ our Lord, *par excellence*, the Son of God.

There is a way of treating this statement and the fact that it expresses which is peculiarly ungracious. It is used as a plea for denying the unique position of Jesus Christ as the only begotten of the Father, for denying the divinity of our Lord. It says, if He is the Son of God, and so are we, then there is

no difference between us. That argument seems to me singularly base. He was not ashamed to call us brethren, but all the same it was an act of amazing condescension, and nothing but wilful blindness can prevent any man from perceiving the difference between himself and Christ. And when similarity does appear, it is similarity with a difference which may be stated at once; what He is by nature, we can only become by grace.

But for all that He stands out the type to us of what true God-sonship is. So look for a moment at the type. What intimacy there was all through His earthly career between Jesus of Nazareth and His God. Did you ever notice that striking incidental testimony from Himself to the uniqueness of His birth? Not once does He call any one father but God, while He hardly ever calls God by any other name. Nothing is more impressive than the filial consciousness of Christ. It sounds so natural on His lips. Even as a boy, the very first words of His that have come vibrating down to us through the ages have this filial ring in them: 'How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's

business.' Men noticed that He was eaten up with zeal for His Father's house. It was His meat and drink to do His Father's will. Every now and again we overhear an interchange of confidences and mutual understandings with His Father. Now it is a remark in a prayer, an aside: 'I know that Thou hearest Me always'; or an, 'Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.' Thus we might go on quoting word after word till the very cross is reached and He breathes His latest breath, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.' What does it all say but this? The true filial spirit is one in which there is perfect understanding with God, from which all misgiving as to God's will and purpose is banished. For Him misgiving never existed. For us it was there begotten of our own misjudgment of God through listening to the lies of the tempter. But it has disappeared when we become sons with the assurance of His forgiveness and good will guaranteed by the Cross of Christ. Now the attitude of the soul to God should be that of unfaltering trust, and constant anxiety to perceive and anticipate God's will, gladly to accept it, and delightedly

to fulfil it. It should be the reproduction of the example set in Jesus Christ, for, as Sabatier truly says, 'Men are Christians exactly in proportion as the filial piety of Jesus is reproduced in them.'[1]

Looking, then, at what is implied in the relationship and what is embodied in the type of sonship, we may pause for a moment to consider what are the essential elements in this gracious relation to which men are restored, and in which they are reinstated by Christ's work on their behalf. Three points may be stated. (*a*) Children of God by grace are made partakers of the divine nature. They share in eternal life. God dwells in them and they in God. As Paul puts it, using the words as a Roman would understand them, 'They are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ,' heirs of eternal life.[2] They get rid of the bondage of the flesh. When a sense of helplessness wrings from the soul the cry, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' they have their reply ready. It has been effected through Jesus

[1] *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, p. 149.
[2] W. E. Ball, *St. Paul and the Roman Law*, p. 13.

Christ. The spiritual has reasserted itself. Sin and death are robbed of their terrors. They shall never perish; none shall pluck them out of the Father's hand. Christ has given them eternal life, the life that is in the Father, and He will raise them up at the last day. The child of God has everlasting life. (*b*) Still more, he is the object of the unchanging love of God, and what is equally important, God trusts him again. Here is something to revel in like the summer sunshine. It brings a sweet intoxication to our souls to think of it, to say to ourselves, 'I am beloved by God; I am trusted by God. His strong arms are ever around me, if I am weary, to lean upon; if I am weak, to carry me; if I fall, to raise me; nay, if I stumble, to keep me from falling and to present me faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.' I think this was in John's mind, even more than his own affection for his readers, when he followed up as he did his cry of glad surprise at the marvellous love of God that called redeemed men His children. 'Beloved,' he says, 'now are we children of God.' Beloved! by whom? By John? Yes. But he says *we*, not *you*. He is

one of the 'beloved,' beloved of God. 'O love of God, how sweet thou art!' (*c*) But childhood, sonship, carries with it the implication of similarity of character to the Father. The relationship is not merely official and emotional. It implies moral and spiritual affinity. It creates a new authority for the old command of the Mosaic covenant, which was also an appeal, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.' On our Saviour's lips this runs, 'Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father is merciful'; 'be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' The family of God must bear the stamp of the family likeness, and that is likeness to the Father, like the likeness of Christ, the Holy Child Jesus.

3. There is a corollary to this relationship to God. Children of God, sons of God, must be brethren to one another.

The relation of brothers to one another is a peculiarly attractive one, seemingly big with possibilities. It may be the elder brother, a friend in need for the younger one. It may be two of about the same age who have everything in common. With the same home ties, one father and mother, the same interests, the

same experiences, they seem the very model for proper relations between man and man. Enjoying their proper rights as men equal and free, they should cap this with mutual interest and affection, fraternity, brotherliness.

This is an ideal that has come to claim its own in our day. The French Revolution travailed in blood for it. Burns sang the pæan of it in words that awaken an echo in every heart:

> 'Then let us pray that come it may,
> As come it will for a' that—
> That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
> May bear the gree, and a' that.
> For a' that and a' that,
> It's comin' yet for a' that,
> That man to man the world o'er,
> Shall brothers be for a' that.'

Brotherhood is the rallying cry of co-operation and socialism, and the secret of any spell they cast or power they exert is the belief that they are nearer the ideal of brotherhood than any other scheme of social organisation or method of commerce. Brotherhood is the note that has given vitality to the movement within the Church—the P.S.A.—which has done most to reattract the sons of labour to its doors.

But all this provokes the question—Why

should I regard my fellow man as my brother? Because we come from the hand of the same Creator? God created also the sod, the shark, and the tiger. Are they my brethren? Am I to adopt the style of St. Francis and talk of Brother Wolf? If so, brotherhood has lost much of its meaning. Or are men brethren because of common descent from Adam, because of our common humanity? If that is all, we are leaning on a broken reed. The far closer ties of membership of even the same family fail to evoke the love they should. It is the ideal of brotherhood rather than its actuality that charms us. The mere fact of common human nature has constantly broken down. You may say that in view of it brotherhood is what should be. It wants something else to say that it shall be. Sir James Fitzjames Stephen has riddled the argument from mere humanity,[1] and history tells that it has been a signal failure against the claims of self-interest. Cain at the very first repudiated it. Moses was met with a truculent retort, when he pleaded it between Hebrew and Hebrew, 'Sirs, ye be brethren; why do ye wrong one to an-

[1] *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, p. 287.

other?' All know the reply. But is not all this very significant? We are prone to treat the idea of the brotherhood of man somewhat in the same way as we have seen earlier in the chapter men treat the fatherhood of God. We grasp at the idea without observing the true conditions of its possibility. We welcome and applaud brotherhood as commanded and extolled in the Gospel, and say, let us practise it forthwith. Amen; but can we? Not unless we lay the necessary foundations. You cannot build the city of brotherhood in mid air. Brothers are born into their fellowship, not elected. And the only stable basis of brotherhood is among those who are sons of God, children of God through Jesus Christ. Among them brotherhood is the complement of sonship. They cannot be true sons of God without being brothers to all who with them share the divine nature and the divine grace. And as for others, they learn to look on them with the pitiful yearning eyes of their Heavenly Father as brothers *in posse* whom they must so treat that they will become brothers indeed.

Oh that the world would learn this lesson! Oh that the men who are anxious, honestly

anxious, to renovate society, recast it so as in some small measure to improve the lot of those who are down, would listen to this truth, and see that the hearts of men must be brought back to God before they will go out to their fellows with a love strong enough and disinterested enough to secure lasting well-being for their brethren! It must be admitted that disinterested souls full of brotherly love inspired by Christ have often failed to be of much service for lack of knowledge, have failed of the larger grasp of things, and shrunk from the public tasks by which alone far-reaching results could be secured. But none the less is it true that to make brotherhood effective, to inspire in the breasts of men a love strong enough to tackle the most ardous and even repulsive tasks that brotherliness demands, men must begin by returning to the proper relation for every man with God—a restored son of God, and then he will be impelled by a holy enthusiasm that will not rest so long as any fellow man falls short of these his rights. That is the example set us in the only-begotten Son, who is also the great elder Brother of the human race.

THE SUPREME DEMAND OF CHRISTIANITY—FAITH

'Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.'
GAL. iii. 26.

CHAPTER IX

THE SUPREME DEMAND OF CHRISTIANITY—FAITH

No thoughtful study of Christianity as a whole can fail to leave at least this impression, that in the work of man's salvation the main burden of it rests upon God. Man has done the mischief, played havoc with himself, and disfigured God's creation. But to repair the mischief, restore the wreck, it is God that is always in evidence, planning, devising, Himself entering the field and using His gracious might, while man can do little more than stand, convicted and amazed, and look on. In the wider sphere of the world's redemption there is a repetition of the situation on the shores of the Red Sea, when Israel was delivered from Egyptian bondage. 'Stand still,' said Moses, 'and see the salvation of God.' That is about all man can do in this greater transaction.

Yet there is one demand, response to which is imperative, if men are to share in this salvation. That demand is for faith, faith in God. And a moment's reflection shows why it should be so. What is the very essence of sin? Read the old story of the Fall over again. What does that reveal as the very spring of sinful deeds? What was the secret of the tempter's triumph? He sowed the seeds of disaffection in Eve's heart by insinuating distrust of God, distrust of the genuineness of His interest in man, distrust of His willingness to do the best for man. She lost confidence in God's truth and good will. She believed the devil's lie. The whole plan of salvation has running through it the great purpose of undoing that gross wrong to God. It reveals in unchallengeable clearness the genuineness of God's love by the sacrifice He made for man's good. It at the same time and thereby re-establishes God's trustworthiness. And all it asks of man is to trust Him in return, and live on that principle. That is the Christian life. 'The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.' There speaks the true Christian

consciousness, in which the central place belongs to faith.

Faith has various aspects. It may be very crude, a mere embryo faith, but as a grain of mustard seed, or it may be the dominant factor in a man's being. It may be regarded as directed towards facts and statements or towards persons, as exhibited in a single act of mind or in a prevailing habit and principle of thought and life and action. We make these distinctions constantly in the way we use the words faith or belief. When we have been led to accept some statement about which we had been in doubt as true, we say, I believe it. We mean, my reason is satisfied; I regard this as fact, as truth. Or I say of this maxim, this policy, this remedy, this man, I believe in it, I believe in him; and I mean that the man is reliable, the principle is sound; in my need I will draw upon them with the conviction that they will serve me well, will not fail me. And how far-reaching is faith in its application! It enters into commerce, science, discovery, invention, and the greatest triumphs of mechanical skill. Business is built on credit. The story of the world explorers is the story

of magnificent ventures of faith and of the power of faith in their leaders to inspire humbler men. Faith in their hypotheses, to which they have leaped as by an inspiration, has been the secret of success with all those who have made the greatest discoveries in biological and chemical and electrical science. Faith has tunnelled the Alps, laid railways across the Rockies and the Andes, dammed the Nile, bridged the Forth, set iron vessels floating on the sea or soaring in the air. With faith playing such a part in the life of man, is it not puerile impertinence, the pettiest obscurantism, in the name of science, common-sense, or what you will, to pit faith against reason; or is it any wonder that faith should also hold a supreme place in the world of religion?

When this is recognised, however, many common notions of faith are seen to be very inadequate. It becomes necessary to ask again, what is faith? What is Christian faith? Is it credence, assent to this proposition or that, the belief that this is true or that is false, this man to be trusted and that to be watched? or while it includes this, does it not also mean very

much more? Let us study this matter, and see what faith means.

1. To begin with, in life we find ourselves in a world of men and things that act and interact upon one another. They impinge on our senses, and we learn thereby in a disjointed way a good deal about them. But we have not been long amongst them before they set us a multitude of questions as to their essential nature, their origins, their relations, to all of which they give us no direct answer. But answer of some sort we must have. We are not satisfied simply to sort and arrange them, which is all reason can do with them. We speculate, guess at their meaning, till the guesses impress with their reasonableness, and, tested by experiment, they are hailed as very truth. Not till this is reached do we feel sure of them, are they certainties to which we pin our faith. We agree with the heroine of Sophocles and the chorus. Dejanira says:

> 'Thus stands my faith; I think it probable,
> While yet I have not made experiment.'

But, says the chorus,

> 'Thou shouldst know by act, for thinking only
> Without a trial gives no certain proof.'[1]

[1] Sophocles, *Trachiniae*, p. 590 ff.

Now what is the faculty that is operative here? What gives us the impulse to try? What takes us behind the scenes? What leaves us assured at last? Reason? Experiment? No, but faith. The strictest logical consistency may be the height of insanity. The apparently reasonable may only require the test of experiment to prove it intolerable. But if these are satisfied and faith is content, what is reached is not a resting-place simply, but a new vantage-ground gained, from which faith may leap forth to still higher fields, acquire new treasure-trove, find means for new ventures.

What is the meaning of this? Is it not the emphatic confirmation of the definition of faith in Hebrews xi. 1;—'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' Or, in other words, faith gives body, gives reality, to things that we hope for, gives the power to recognise things that are not seen. Men have debated as to the existence of a fourth dimension. If it exists, faith will grasp it, for it is 'the sixth sense.' As the eye is for the visible, the ear for the audible, the hand for the tangible, so faith is the

faculty for the spiritual, for the world of the things unseen, for knowing and seeing Him who is invisible—God. Not God alone, but the hearts and thoughts of men are of the things unseen. Forgiveness, love, is unseen; yet this man knows his brother has forgiven him, that woman knows she is beloved. How? By faith. They have heard the word; each knows the man, and they believe him. But so, too, between our souls and God. Love and forgiveness and the meaning of things are in question here; thoughts of the heart of God, invisible. But as Herrmann says, 'Faith is the perception of the operation of God which calls up in us a new mode of thinking, feeling, willing, and lets us see the world in which we live in a new light.' It affords the inner sight which often saves our reason, and we cry with Balzac's hero, 'There is a God, there is a God, or all this would be too nonsensical.'[1] This is not the result of sight, but of insight; and insight is faith. 'Touch me not,' said the Risen Christ to the eager Mary. Why? asks St. Bernard.[2] And his answer is;

[1] Balzac, *L'Auberge Rouge.*

[2] *Song of Solomon*, Sermon xxviii.

to teach her, and through her all Christ's followers, that in matters of religion, in things of the spirit, it is not on the evidence of the senses they must rest, but on faith, which reads the deeper evidence, goes straight to the inmost soul, penetrates to the inherent congruity of things, and believes because it has met the truth, and can do no other.

Now the whole divine scheme of salvation, the magnificence of its conception, its perfect adaptation to conserve the character of God and yet meet the need of men, the sublimity of the sacrifice, the riches of the grace, the glory of its execution, the dignity of the position to which man is restored by it, is of this transcendent nature. It carries the warrant of its own truth and credibility within itself, and that will be apparent to any man who will give it the attention it deserves. It will evoke faith, reveal itself to faith, and in no other way will men ever understand it, or conceive it possible. Mere reasoning could never have reached it. But once set on the track, no other explanation save that given by faith will reasonably account for the presence of God's Son living in flesh among the ranks of men or dying

on the tree. But faith can understand it; and so God says, believe and be saved. If men are not satisfied, let them apply the test of experiment, and they will find that, as Dr. Forrest says, 'faith verifies itself in precisely the same manner as any other moral principle, . . . it enriches their being, draws out new powers, opens . . . deep sources of peace and joy.'[1] In other words, they are saved; the exercise of faith has done it; and in the exercise it verifies itself.

2. But faith is more than this faculty of the unseen, the spiritual. Or rather, it operates in more than the world of thought, the sphere of truth as embodied in fact and dogma. Faith is the great bond among personalities. It has been well said, 'The great fact in objective Christianity is incarnation in order to atonement; the great fact of subjective Christianity is union with Christ, whereby we receive the atonement.'[2] The bond of that union is faith. What transfers the work of Christ from the world of spectacle to the sphere of possession, takes away the element of bare legality and exter-

[1] *Authority of Christ*, p. 129.
[2] Professor H. B. Smith.

nality from His activities for men, and brings them all into the world of the ethical and personal, is union between the souls of men and Christ. Christ is not simply a great representative or substitute, doing for us what we have left undone. His is no such external relationship. It is intimate, vital, real. He has identified Himself with men, and they identify themselves with Him, endorse His action, make it their own. But how? In the only way in which such things can be done in this realm, by a union the bond of which is faith.

It is in view of this that it has been beautifully said that faith is the heritage of the individual at birth. He is born in union with the whole of being. The first instinctive movement of the new-born infant is to cling to something. It is only with difficulty the babe detaches himself from the mother's breast; as manhood is reached, isolates himself from the nature around him and the ideas in which he floats; attains his individuality. He is born in union with humanity, with the world and with God. The trace of this original union is faith.[1] It may be that in the

[1] Amiel, *Journal*, p. 192, cf. p. 237.

realisation of himself some ties must be broken, and that in his recklessness and folly many more are broken that should never even have been strained. These unnecessary breaks are sin. But all this only prepares us for seeing faith come back to its own when sin's ravages are repaired, and man is restored to the lost inheritance. The bond of union now is not new. It is the old bond restored. The mysterious tie between a child and its parent is respect; between a man and his friend, esteem; between a man and his wife, confidence and love. The counterpart of this, and the vital bond here between a man and his God in religion, is faith. And the faith is mutual. God trusts him and he trusts God.

But perhaps you are asking, where in all this is provision left for conversion, for repentance, for obedience, on which the Saviour laid such stress? If faith is all that is insisted on, is there not room left for the old reproach which Paul had to rebut? Does this not seem to militate against righteousness and godliness? Does it not ignore and so imperil the claims of the ethical? It is well that questions like these should be asked and answered. It is

wholesome to find conscience on the alert. But here it is in a measure a question of the meaning of terms. What is conversion? It is the turning ofthe soul from sin and self to Christ. What leads the soul to turn to Christ? Is it not a sense of need awakened and the conviction that Christ can meet it? In other words, conversion is the result of faith. Or repentance, what is repentance? It is the first manifestation of faith. Alarm may precede; remorse may precede; and these indicate concern for sin. But these are not repentance. They only become repentance when, though the sorrow remains, the doubt and anxiety that haunt them disappear, and they pass into trust in God for pity and pardon. In other words, as I have said, repentance only begins when faith appears. Faith covers and includes repentance and conversion and involves obedience.

'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven,' is Christ's vivid way of stating the necessity of faith. The lost relationship, the relationship which was to be restored, was sonship, the rights and privileges of a child of God. But what is the childlike attitude? Is

it not trust, faith, confidence, buoyant and free from care? That is what Christ would have restored within the soul. For that He worked. To evoke it He bent all His energies, and wherever He perceived it He recognised a child of God. Roman centurion, Syrophœnician woman, Samaritan leper, Jericho publican, penitent woman of the streets—faith found in any of them was a link with Himself, the promise, possibility, and pledge of all they ought to be and would become. 'Give us faith,' says one—that is Christ's attitude, for faith He knows will grow—'Give us faith,

'Unreasonable, vague, unsubstanced, but still faith;
True faith doth face the blackness of despair—
Blank faithlessness itself; bravely it holds
To duty unrewarded and unshared;

'For faith is hope, and hope alone is life.
It loves where all is loveless; it endures
In the long passion of the soul for God.'[1]

3. The quotation which I have just made points to the third element in faith which gives it the place it has in the Christian scheme. It is not only the faculty of the spiritual, and the bond of union between personalities, but faith is a permanent energy of

[1] R. W. Gilder.

the soul. It is the secret principle of continuous activity. And this crowns its value as man's required response to God's efforts on his behalf.

Sometimes when reading the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, or some of those utterances of Christ where He commends faith as the victorious principle in life, we agree; but we feel as if this were something different from what the same word is used to describe when the offer of salvation is made to us and we are bidden believe and be saved. In the one case we seem to be called once for all to a single decisive outleap of the soul and a grasp upon the proffered hand of God; in the other we seem to be called to the practice of a new prevailing habit. And that is quite true. But the explanation is that the decisive deed of soul by which I stake my salvation on His offered mercy, put my welfare in the pierced hand of Christ, is to be simply the first act of a whole new series that together will constitute the new habit of my life. As I trust Him once, so I am to trust Him always; as I trust Him for one thing, so I am to trust Him for all things. So faith is not to

be thought of merely as an act. It is a habit, a prevailing energy that repeats and manifests itself in a whole series of acts, as diverse as the achievements of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Rahab, Samson, Jephtha, Gideon, David, but all marked by the same characteristic—faith.

It is impossible to exaggerate the power of a prevailing faith. Mountains are molehills to it. All things are possible to him that believeth. As Carlyle says, 'Of all feelings, states, principles, Belief (Faith) is the clearest, strongest, against which all others contend in vain; it is the beginning and first condition of all spiritual force whatsoever.'[1] That is true of faith in every case. Let a man believe in his cause, or his leader, or his advocate, it is an inspiration. He becomes as strong as his principle. That accounts for the tremendous power of faith in the Christian. Who is the object of the Christian's faith? It is God. What task is beyond His power? It matters not what he undertakes—the conflict with temptation within, the reclamation of his own nature, the transformation of his habits

[1] *Miscellaneous Essays*, iv. 56.

into conformity with the example of Christ; the strife with evil without—the Christian is on God's side; God is on his side. It must be the side of victory. That is no temptation to languor. It is an incentive to cheerful, courageous effort. Of course he knows that many a task to which he must set himself, many a spell of discipline to which he must submit, will be no child's play or matter of an afternoon.

> 'Let no man think that sudden in a minute
> All is accomplished and the work is done.
> Though with thine earliest dawn thou shouldst begin it,
> Scarce were it ended in thy setting sun.
>
> Oh the regret, the struggle and the failing!
> Oh the days desolate and useless years!
> Vows in the night, so fierce and unavailing!
> Stings of my shame and passion of my tears!'[1]

It is well that men should remember that that may be the course of experience through which faith has to fight its way. Christian had to pass through the Valley of Humiliation and of the Shadow of Death, ay, and through Vanity Fair. And it was no rose-strewn track he followed. But God was with him from end

[1] Myers, *St. Paul.*

to end, and though he was hard bested, he never was at a loss except in Doubting Castle, into which he foolishly strayed, and faith died away. Paul sketches the Christian warrior with a sword in one hand, and a shield in the other. But what is the shield? It is the shield of faith. And what is the shield of faith? 'The Lord God is a Sun and Shield.' Faith grasps God, and God is his defence. Yet a shield seems too passive an emblem for this comparison. Here, rather, is a child with one hand free to do its little part in climbing the hill, achieving its task, fighting its battle. But the other hand, the right hand, is close locked in God's, and God is upholding and doing the most of the work. That is what gives energy; that is what inspires confidence; not so much my faith as He in whom my faith is placed—God.

It is no wonder, after all that has been said, that faith should hold the place it does in the Christian religion. It is the perfect instrument for receiving a gift, and salvation is a free gift from God. It must pass into vigorous exercise to secure its own, but it never can earn any credit. There is no credit

in hunger or thirst. There is no credit in opening the eyes to see, in turning the ear to hear, or in grasping a friendly hand stretched out to rescue from danger. And these are the analogues of faith. It awakens under the stimulus of the soul's craving and its need. It lends an ear to Christ, lets in the light from Him. It grasps His hand stretched out to save. But all its efforts win no meed, deserve no credit. Faith does not save; it only links to Him who does; and God's is all the glory.

That, too, is why God accepts it, asks no more. God takes the man on trust who trusts in Christ. Christ is his surety, Christ his guarantee. Christ's work is a provision for a complete salvation, here and hereafter. It is good work begun; it is work which He will perfect. When He has inspired true faith in a man's heart, the root principle of holiness is embedded there. Sanctification is begun. He will never perish; none shall pluck him out of Christ's hand.

In the face of all this, why should men and women make difficulties about believing? Why should they treat as mysterious and

perplexing something as simple as the spontaneous attitude of a little child? Let them break through the web of words and know that trusting God is taking God at His word and living their lives in this confidence. For the rest, 'Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief.'

THE MOVING SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY— THE HOLY SPIRIT

'The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost.'—JOHN xiv. 26.

'The Comforter . . . even the Spirit of truth.'—JOHN xv. 26.

'All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit.'—1 COR. xii. 11.

CHAPTER X

THE MOVING SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY—THE HOLY SPIRIT

It is an unfortunate thing that a certain animus has been aroused against the Shorter Catechism by discussions as to its suitability for use in schools. Perhaps its terms may be beyond the range of children. But what is to be thought of modern intelligence, if it feels itself incompetent to grasp what after all was prepared as an accommodation for those of weaker capacity of two hundred and fifty years ago? What about our advancing intelligence, at least so far as spiritual matters are concerned? In place of being abstruse or obscure, there are really few simpler, clearer statements to be found anywhere, than in the Shorter Catechism of one, at any rate, of the most vital sections of religious truth, and that is in reference to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps the reason that many stumble at the Catechism here is not so much intellectual degeneracy as lack of spiritual experience in the subject handled. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.' But there comes a point in the study of Christianity, when it is impossible to regard it simply from the outside, and a man must enter in order to see the Kingdom of God. Any man can in a measure follow an account of the Bible, of the standard of Christianity, of its purpose, of the Lord Jesus Christ, or of the bond of union between the soul and Him. But a new domain is entered when the Christian consciousness is interrogated to account for itself. What then is found, whether in Epistle of Scripture or Catechism of Divines, may very well perplex an outsider. He knows nothing about the subject, has no corresponding experience by which to test it, be it found described in Scripture, Catechism, or testimony of the believer. And it is not the obscurity of the subject wherever it be treated, but its strangeness that leaves it a riddle to many, who try to cover their ignorance by affected scorn.

Even the Christian needs to clear up his mind on this matter. He needs to probe his heart and study his Bible for the proper answer to the questions, How does the spiritual life begin? How are the Christian graces acquired? It is so easy to get off the track, to be scared by misrepresentations of the idea of God's sovereignty or of election. But let him look into his own experience. Let him ask himself, Where did my faith begin? How did I enter on the enjoyment of the position of being a child of God? As Coleridge says, 'Shall I refer the first movements and preparations to my own will and understanding, and bottom my claim to the promises on my own comparative excellence? If not, if no man dare take this honour to himself, to whom shall he assign it, if not to that Being in whom the promise originated, and on whom its fulfilment depends?'[1] A man's own inner consciousness tells him that just as it has been through no goodness of his own he has been accepted with God, so it has been through no natural inclination of his own that he has turned to Christ as a Saviour. He has been

[1] *Aids to Reflection*, p. 161.

drawn to it, drawn by divine influences, impelled by God. The natural history of his new life begins with a birth. He has been born again, born of the Spirit. And he feels that it could not be otherwise. Life can only come from the Life Giver, the last Adam who was made a quickening Spirit. Jesus of Nazareth was right when He said to Nicodemus, 'Ye must be born again.' Even faith, the first activity of the new-born soul, its birth-grip upon God, is the gift of God.

1. We call the Agent in all this the Holy Spirit? Who is the Holy Spirit?

From the statements of Scripture and the facts of Christian experience, the Church of Christ has elaborated the doctrine of the Trinity. This doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost of revelation and experience are one God, is the Christian attempt to reconcile the different phases of the self-revelation of God with the unanimous voice of Scripture and the inmost conviction of the religious consciousness that there is, and can only be, one supreme Being, one God. Why should it ever have seemed otherwise? The existence of polytheism is

proof that the unity is not always obvious, that indeed the natural man, unaided, generally fails to find it. In Scripture again, God is represented as the great Creator and Sustainer and Controller at the back of the world's, existence and its history. But He appears at times in visible form among men. Still more, He comes into the most intimate personal relations with some men as an indwelling director to equip them for certain tasks, to give the skill, or strength, or insight, or courage for the prosecution of them. Is this all the activity of one indivisible God? Or how is it? Or take it thus. In redemption there is a great plan, divine in its completeness of design, which originated in the heart of God, for the saving of His highest creature, man, from the fruits of his own folly and sin. This plan involved stupendous activities, and the Man, Jesus of Nazareth, is found on earth doing all that had to be done, and in Him men discovered God, found no other name adequate to describe Him. But men who have received into their lives the benefit of all that Christ has done for them, know that God has once more, and in yet another way, been at work with

them, and that it is He who, all unseen, dwells within them—God the Spirit. They have met Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, God in what we call Three Persons, in three activities so distinct that we feel that there must be some distinction within deity to make it possible, and yet so entirely one in aim and purpose and will, that it cannot be that here are three Gods: the Three are One.

It is with the third in this Trinity men come in contact when they find God at the roots of their faith in Christ. They find themselves the subjects of God operative in the souls of men. And we call God as He is directly operative in the souls of men, God the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit.

2. The next point to consider is the relation of the Holy Spirit to the mission and work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Lord regarded the coming and work of the Spirit as the indispensable sequel to His own mission. His work was a great work for men. But if ever it was to be appreciated and appropriated by them, if ever it was to become an operative force in their lives, to become their own, He knew that nothing less than

divine influences must be brought to bear upon them individually to achieve it. Apart from that His work would be but a magnificent spectacle and failure. But the divine resources were not exhausted when He had joined the ranks of men and died upon the tree to bear their sins. God could come and deal with men one by one, and from within their own hearts. He could reach individual hearts and operate upon them. God the Spirit could touch the spirits of all flesh, and this pervasive, individualised divine activity was what the Christ, God visibly incarnate, withdrew from earth to make way for. 'If I go away, the Comforter will come.'

There are points of parallel between the coming of the Christ and the coming of the Spirit. Pentecost is the counterpart of Bethlehem, and the Spirit indwelling in the Church and in every individual member is the counterpart of the divine indwelling in human flesh in Jesus Christ Himself. Indeed, it is right to remember the part which, as we learn from Scripture, the Holy Spirit fulfilled in the connection with the birth of Christ, and His descent upon Him at His baptism when the active ministry

was about to begin. It was in the power of the Spirit that the divine Man accomplished His mission. What the Spirit was to Christ He is to be, and more still, to all the sons of God. He is to be at the new birth of their life, to be their guide and counsellor and strength, abiding in them and with them for ever.

But as Professor Denney remarks, 'The Spirit is the divine correlative of faith . . . the divine factor in all that restores man to, and maintains him in, the life of God. But the Spirit does not work *in vacuo*. He glorifies Christ.'[1] That is to say, Christ's work provided the material with which the Holy Spirit operates on the hearts of men. He is helpless, with reverence be it said, apart from the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that is why it is said 'the Spirit was not yet given, because Christ was not yet glorified.' The Spirit would be as impotent without Christ, as Christ Himself without His cross.

3. But how does the Spirit exert His influence; how does He apply the materials which Christ has put at His disposal?

Nothing answers this more concisely than

[1] *The Death of Christ*, p. 193.

the answer to the often quizzically put question of the Catechism, What is effectual calling? Do you remember what that is? If you do, ponder it well. If you do not, learn it by heart, and test each clause by the life of your soul, and your experience in the things of the Spirit by each clause, and you will gain a knowledge of your own heart and of the Spirit's ways that will ever after stand you in good stead.

'Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the Gospel.'

Nobody can read that without feeling that it is no easy task that is in hand, when the effort is made to turn a sinner from the error of his ways, from the service of self and sin and Satan unto God. How humiliating it is to think of the obduracy of the human heart that is implied in the need for such words as 'persuade and enable' in reference to closing in friendly terms with the winsome and gracious and lovable Lord Jesus Christ! It is almost incredible that this should be necessary. Ah! but it

means a turning of the whole man. Mind, heart, conscience, will, have all to be acted upon. And as F. W. Robertson said, 'How immense is the difference between deeply affecting the feelings and permanently changing the heart.'[1]

Where Robertson said that, he was speaking of the work of the preacher. As a matter of fact, the Holy Spirit generally uses one man, be he preacher or not, to reach another. Men are His agents, the channels by which He gains access to other men. But men acting in what way? Look at the first conversions to Christianity. How did they originate? Says John Stuart Blackie somewhere, 'The starting-point plainly is the effusion of the Holy Ghost, an influence . . . altogether different in kind from the action of arguments upon the ratiocinative faculty of the mind, which had indeed been preceded, not by inductions or deductions or analytic dissections or by any scholastic exercitations at all, but by meetings for social prayer—prayer, which is the great feeder of the moral nature of man when reverting to the original source of all moral life.'

The Spirit uses Scripture in the same way.

[1] *Life*, i. 25.

A man turns to the Bible, and poring over it, in earnest about its teachings, and anxious through it to reach the salvation in Christ, finds faith awake within his heart. Whence has this come? Let Dante answer:

> 'The abundant dew
> Of the most Holy Spirit, then said I,
> Poured out upon the Scriptures Old and New,
> A syllogism is which doth supply
> A force so keen, that all that 's else inferred
> Would seem compared with it a fallacy.'[1]

Or in the homelier but imaginative language of David Steven, one of the Caithness 'Men,' 'The poor sinner meditating on the wonders of redeeming love declared in the Old and New Testaments, and thus spreading his little sails, the blessed Spirit of God may some day breathe upon him, and sail him into the harbour of rest.'

It is just as our Saviour said it would be. The Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to the disciples. Having come to the disciples, He uses them as witnesses through whom He convicts the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. And if the first effect is consternation, and the second the

[1] *Paradiso*, xxiv. 91 ff.

cry of alarm, 'What must I do to be saved?' the climax is the glorious experience described by Paul, 'The love of Christ constraineth us because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead, and that He died for all that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him who died for them and rose again.' It is the sight of Christ which the Spirit affords, the sight of Him as a great, gracious, self-sacrificing Saviour, laying Himself upon the altar to save the lives of the men who turned their backs on Him with scorn and condemned Him to the tree, that is irresistible. The awe-struck, convicted, shame-smitten soul, feeling that it has played false to everything that is noble and chivalrous and worthy, to say nothing of what is humane and just, by the way it has treated Christ, turns with a great sob of regret and humiliation and begs to be forgiven. It is the Spirit's work begun as He breaks the hard hearts of men. And as He does with Christ's work for us, discrediting all our own righteousness and throwing us back on this as our only hope, so He does with the great example of Christ. He makes us feel the charm of that beautiful life of holiness, and

then becomes a living impulse within to the effort to reproduce it in ourselves. He takes up His abode in our hearts, makes each heart a holy place, a divine sanctuary; and then a holy awe takes possession of the God-possessed soul to see that the temple of the Holy Ghost is kept worthy of its august Inhabitant. It was this that sank deep into the soul of the Apostle Paul, and made him speak with words of such solemn wonder as he reminded others of it: 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?' He seemed to feel as if it were enough to ask Christians to think of this sacred fact about themselves for one moment, in order to have touched a spring of holy living which must prove irresistible.

4. Another point worthy of consideration is the results which the Holy Spirit attains. Theologically speaking, the results are twofold —Regeneration and Sanctification. In less formal terms, they are the commencement and the growth of the life of a child of God.

When a Christian accounts for himself, he says, 'By the grace of God I am what I am.' And in saying that he says two things. He says,

I owe my existence as a child of God to the work of the Holy Spirit in my heart, making me appreciate and appropriate Christ as my Saviour, my Substitute and Sacrifice, Redeemer and Reclaimer. It is the Holy Spirit who has applied Christ's cleansing and consecrating blood to my soul and made a new man of me. But he means this also: it is by the work of the Holy Spirit that I am what I am, myself and not another. The Holy Spirit is the secret of our individuality, and it is due to His versatility that we have all that variety of gift and endowment which Paul describes in 1 Cor. xii.: 'All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will.' There is no more a dull uniformity in the creations of grace than there is in the creations of the world of nature. And it is not only that; but every shrewd observer will endorse the words of Professor Oman: 'Nothing in character impresses me more than the wonderful freshness of feeling, justice of judgment, promptness of decision of people who have had scarce any teacher but the Spirit of God.' When I read words like these there rises to my mind a patient figure for years in

the grip of rheumatism, which crippled every joint, till she thanked God when she could raise her hand even a few inches. I see her seated in her chair, in which her brother placed her ere he left for his work in the pits in the morning, and where she sat till he lifted her back to bed at night. Her Bible is on her knee. She spent days and weeks alone with no company but her God. And how wonderfully fresh and true and far-sighted were the views she expressed on divine things, views, she would tell you, she got when she was 'having a wee crack alane wi' her Saviour!'

The Holy Spirit is the secret of spiritual growth.

> 'Every virtue we possess,
> And every victory won,
> And every thought of holiness
> Are His alone.'

So says Harriett Auber's hymn, a poem not only entitled to be called the best hymn to the Holy Spirit in the English language, but a masterpiece of simple, concise, illuminative Christian teaching on this great and little appreciated section of divine truth. Men talk of love, joy, peace, etc., as the fruits of the Spirit. But when they come to the cultivating

of them, they scarcely think of the source from which they spring. They hear the call to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and they forget that it is only as the Spirit takes the things of Christ and shows them to us that we can acquire the larger knowledge of Christ that means spiritual enrichment. We may learn with greater minuteness and detail the facts of His life, the features of the land where He dwelt, the people among whom He sojourned, the language which He spoke, and yet be no farther on in sympathetic understanding of the mind of Christ, no more sensitive to the right He has in us to unlimited obedience and service, no more responsive to His place in many an unexpected side of our life's activities. It is only the Holy Spirit that makes all this plain to us.

Still more, He it is that lets us see that the spiritual life is not some other life than that of everyday affairs, is not a life calling for seclusion from our fellows, but the same life as other folks must live, only lived on other principles than those which regulate the world's conduct. Oh, if the Christian could only learn that lesson!

That there is nothing more spiritual in offering prayer than in driving a nail home or adding up a column exactly, if only the latter be done in the proper spirit! When men have learned to do all the common tasks of life in the spirit of Christ, the Spirit's work will be completed, and God's will done in earth as it is in heaven.

5. There is one further phase of the Spirit's activity that must not be forgotten. His presence within us is evidential.

It is testimony to ourselves that we are the children of God. As He begets in us love to the brethren, we know thereby that we are born of God. And our faith in Jesus Christ testifies to the same thing. 'Hereby we know,' says John, 'that He abideth in us, by the spirit which He hath given us.' All the eighth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans says the same thing. These men, John and Paul, were writing out of ripe Christian experience. When they asked themselves how they were sure of their interest in Christ, their reply was, we have a treasure in our hearts, a pledge of it, in the spirit He has given us. They were conscious of a new disposition, a new way of thinking, feeling, judging, as different as could

be from what was theirs before they knew Christ. They felt themselves controlled by another Spirit than their own, and the meekness, gentleness, constancy, and courage, which now they practised, they had learned with difficulty, till at last it was a habit, second nature, in the school of Christ, taught by His Spirit.

Still more, that presence of the Spirit in our hearts is the witness to God that we are His children. What is the meaning of that trustful call, Abba, Father, that reaches God's ear? It is the voice of the Spirit, but it comes from a human heart in which the Spirit dwells. This is the earnest, the seal of the Spirit, His attestation that the claimant is indeed a child of God, an heir of His inheritance.[1] And the knowledge that this is the witness He thus bears on our behalf is our comfort in sorrow, our strength in weakness, our courage in danger. This explains His name, the Paraclete, the Comforter, the Advocate. He is our Stand-by in every time of need.

'Breathe on me, Breath of God;
Fili me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love,
And do what Thou wouldst do.

[1] W. E. Ball, *St. Paul and Roman Law*, ch. ii.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until with Thee I will one will
To do and to endure.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Till I am wholly Thine,
Until this earthly part of me
Glows with Thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
So shall I never die,
But live with Thee the perfect life
Of Thine eternity.'

THE AFFINITIES OF CHRISTIANITY

'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.'—PHIL. iv. 8.

CHAPTER XI

THE AFFINITIES OF CHRISTIANITY

WHAT is the proper Christian attitude towards all that is non-Christian? What is the relation of Christianity towards the religious faiths and their adherents which were in the world before Christianity appeared? What is the relation of Christianity towards peoples and their beliefs that have not yet come into touch with itself? What is the relation of the Christian conception of character and life to other conceptions?

It is not enough to say that the proper Christian attitude, by the commission of our Lord is, and always has been, missionary, that of an endeavour to win all men to Christianity. The point is, how is the missionary to approach the beliefs, the practices, the ideals of life and conduct, of men of other faiths. Is he to be purely antagonistic, or is he to be conciliatory,

not only toward the people but towards their prevalent ideas? Is his conduct to be guided as if it were covered by the words in John's Epistle: 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world . . . for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.' Is his attitude to be one of universal condemnation, to see nothing in the world but what is bad? Is that what John meant? Some think so and advocate that attitude, but their number steadily grows fewer.

Men soon began to feel that that was not what John meant in words like these. Just as the Saviour met with faith in a Roman centurion and in a Syrophœnician woman that cast all Jewish faith into the shade, so very soon men came to see that in spite of the corruption which was in the world through lust, there was a great deal that was admirable and commendable. There were signs of a true feeling after God in many hearts. There were holy men to be met with. There were high standards of living, and virtues were held in high esteem and set before men as their ideals. These they could not

believe were the work of the devil. Dante found it one of the problems he could not solve, try as he would—and he returns to it again and again—why Virgil and other high-souled men of classic days should be sternly regarded by the Church of Rome as only fit for hell. It was as inexplicable as their condemnation of unbaptized infants to the same limbo. Truer far to the spirit of Christ were the Fathers like Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria, who recognised what was called the *logos spermatikos*, that is to say, the divine reason operative in germ throughout mankind and beyond the bounds of definite revelation. They saw the Spirit of God in everything that was good in the thoughts of men anywhere. That, I take it, was in the mind of Paul in the great passage in Philippians, 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.' Here Paul seems to say that Christianity should claim affinity with all that is good and true in the world, under whatever

religious, philosophical, political, or artistic colours it is to be found. Just as Judaism was in some sort the parent or elder sister, or at least the precursor and schoolmaster to lead Jews to Christ, so for the rest of the world their religious and moral ideals, so far as they were good and elevating, were, and are to be, regarded as cousins, some distant enough, indeed, but some only once or twice removed from Christianity, not far from the Kingdom of God. This does not mean, of course, that any of them can be regarded as permanently sufficient for any people, an adequate substitute for knowledge of Christ and the truth and life as they are in Him. But it does mean that whatever in them merits admiration or approval should receive it. Whatever is in harmony with the spirit of Christ should be cordially acknowledged. Whatever is really helpful in another faith, and may aid a Christian to an even better understanding of his own, is to be thankfully welcomed and devoutly studied and pondered.

1. Let us look for a moment at points of affinity between Christianity and some other faiths.

I say 'some' simply because it is impossible to look at them all. There is not one of them that cannot help us somewhere. Rather than sink into dead materialism and atheism any reflecting man will make Wordsworth's words his own:

'I'd rather be a Pagan suckled on a creed outworn.'

And a welcome service is being done to Christianity by the appearance of the science of Comparative Religion. The revelation of God in Christ can never suffer by comparison with any other faith. It will only become more and more apparent that in it is the religion that embraces the best there is in every faith.

Take the religion of India with its myriads of gods. At first it seems only an interminable mass of degrading superstitions. But while that is so far painfully true, it is something to find what lies at the back of it: the awe-inspiring sense of God's presence everywhere, not only the God of the ever-watchful eye who is over all and knows everything, but the God present in everything, making by His presence every object, every relationship, every

life, a sacred thing. There is an affinity between that and Christianity.

Take Druidism, with its terrible sacrifices of human life, as shocking as the gloomy rites of Moloch, God of Moab. Still, has it nothing to tell us? Is it not just the persistent, inarticulate cry of the human heart, misled indeed as to the way by its own fear-distorted thought of God, yet eager at all costs to be at one again with Him? Is it not the cry which Micah heard in distracted Jerusalem in its consternation and dismay, 'Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' And cannot Christianity take up and utilise this desire to make atonement, in order to commend God's true way to satisfy Him and the sacrifice He has provided? Christianity again understands; for the human heart is one.

Or take the old religions of Egypt. How solemn is all their teaching of judgment and immortality! No Christian can visit the temples of Egypt in their ruins or study the vivid portrayal on their walls of the destiny of a soul issuing in tragedy or triumph over death, without feeling that in spite of much that is

grotesque, incongruous, repellent, there is much also with which he can sympathise, much he can learn, much he can understand.

And so in every direction. A thoughtful Christian will feel that the attitude of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews towards the Mosaic religion, critical but sympathetic, which says not, 'This is bad, wholly bad, fit only to be cast out,' but rather, 'With all its excellency, here is still less than the best; Christianity is better; Christianity is the best'—that is the attitude to assume everywhere. It is God's own attitude. 'He is not far from any one of us,' said Paul to the pagan philosophers of Athens.

> 'Children of men! the unseen Power, whose eye
> For ever doth accompany mankind,
> Hath looked on no religion scornfully
> That men did ever find.'[1]

How near Christianity can come to faiths less mature is suggested when we hear Christian poets take names of pagan deities and feel that without irreverence they can use them of Christ, as though to tell those who worshipped the heathen god that they would

[1] Matthew Arnold, *Poems*: Progress.

find all and more than their pagan best in Jesus Christ. So Milton speaks of Christ as 'the mighty Pan,'[1] and Dante addresses the Saviour thus:

> 'If the name be lawful, our great Jove,
> Who on the earth for us wast crucified.'[2]

We all have felt that Pope's 'Universal Prayer' has its justification in the common heart of humanity crying out for the living God:

> 'Father of all! in every age,
> In every clime adored,
> By Saint, by Savage, and by Sage,
> Jehovah, Jove, or Lord.
>
> To Thee whose Temple is all Space,
> Whose Altar Earth, Sea, Skies,
> One chorus let all Being raise,
> All Nature's Incense rise.'

So far, then, in a very sketchy and merely suggestive way, we have some of the affinities of the Christian faith with other beliefs and religions, to which, of course, there are many parallels.

2. Come into the domain of morals, and the same thing reappears in a still more vivid form.

Christianity did not come into a world

[1] *Ode on the Nativity.* [2] *Purgatorio*, vi. 118.

ignorant or devoid of laws of right living. The world's misfortune rather was that the art of life had in large measure been lost. 'The Gentiles showed the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts accusing or else excusing one another.' As for the Jews, they, though they were evil, knew how to give good gifts to their children, and were naturally ready to do a good turn to a neighbour or to help a brute beast. Our Lord's challenge was not that they did nothing right, but this: What do ye more than others? And the implication is that the Christian character includes at least the best that there is in any moral system, while it goes on far beyond them all; and it should be prepared to welcome merit wherever it is to be found, and to stake its own superiority on possessing power, not only to portray, but to enable any believing soul to attain.

When the Christian teachers came to Greece, they found a people whose deepest thinkers had given profound attention to the whole world of morals. The most famous treatise of Aristotle was his *Nicomachean Ethics*, which, following Socrates, established for ever the

place of the four cardinal virtues of the ancients, Justice, Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude. Plato's most elaborate treatise, *The Republic*, was an attempt to construct an ideal state wherein righteousness should dwell. Coming to Rome, it found a people whose whole thought was dominated by respect for law and authority, and whose leading thinkers, from Cicero onwards in his *De Officiis*, down through Seneca and Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius and Dion Chrysostom, pondered and expounded the duties of worthy life. In time came the clash of the Latin and Teutonic races, and the Teutonic virtues stood out in dignity, Chivalry and Honour. Missionary enterprise, in course of years, took Christianity east to China, where it met the moral system of Confucius instilling respect for parents and ancestors, or west to Peru to a people among whom, under a mild despotism, many graces of character throve and flourished. Modern days have revealed *Bushido*, the ethical code of Japan, with its roots in chivalry or fair play, and bearing fruits of Rectitude, Courage, Benevolence, Politeness, Veracity, Honour, Loyalty, the reality of which has impressed every

Western mind in the sterling qualities which this people showed in its fierce encounters with China and Russia.

This is not the whole story of the moral condition of any of these peoples. There is a dark side which there must be no cloaking over. But what is to be the attitude of Christianity to all the good in this? How is it to regard the virtues of non-Christian systems and non-Christian men? Is it to repudiate them, belittle them, refuse to recognise them? Certainly not. Paul's word comes in here with direct and telling force: 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.' As John Owen says somewhere, 'The world is not in a condition to be able to spare the good acts even of bad men.' It may seem to some a problem how we are to account for them. But, as Calvin asks, 'Shall we deem anything to be noble and praiseworthy without tracing it to the hand of God?'[1] Is not the natural

[1] *Institutes*, Bk. II. ch. xv.

explanation this: that God by His Spirit implanted these thoughts in the hearts of men at the very first, and in spite of the growth of weeds of error and vice, some hardy plants have survived and struggled through and asserted themselves? The tenderer graces have been smothered. It has needed Christianity to recover their place for them. Even the sturdier plants have not escaped contamination from a vitiated soil and need transplanting or ingrafting into Christ to restore them to pristine perfection. But it is worse than folly not to welcome and applaud and admire moral worth wherever it is to be found. It may be true of even so good a representative of non-Christian ethics as Bushido that in comparison with Christianity it is 'a dimly burning wick,' but the learned Japanese who makes the admission rightly adds, it is a wick 'which the Messiah was proclaimed not to quench, but to fan into a flame.'[1]

Indeed there is need for caution in dealing even with many an old superstition which has been the prop or fostering shelter for many a heathen's virtue. Crude, vicious even, it may

[1] Nitobé, *Bushido*, p. 190.

have become; but simply with rude hand, regardless of the consequences, to attack and destroy, has repeatedly broken down the sanction for some worthy feature of pagan life before the support which Christian truth can afford has been introduced, and the fatal result has been the collapse of the characteristic that was admired. This savage was held in check by his fetish till you told him it was a lie. But he had not yet learnt Christ, and has run riot ever since. Was it wise? Of course the day was sure to come when the frail prop, exhausted and decayed, would require to be removed. But till Christianity, the static and dynamic of the Spirit of God, was substituted, its withdrawal imperilled the whole superstructure. What the intervention and substitution of Christianity means for any system of ethics is well brought out by the Japanese writer already referred to. He says, 'One remarkable difference between the experience of Europe and Japan is that whereas in Europe, when chivalry was weaned from feudalism and adopted by the Church, it obtained a fresh lease of life, in Japan no religion was large enough to nourish it. . . . Bushido was left an

orphan . . . the edict formally abolishing feudalism in 1870 was the signal to toll the knell of Bushido.'[1] But what that means is that it is for Christianity to regard with a friendly eye the worthy ideals of any people with which it comes in contact, to ennoble them by pouring its own quickening spirit into them, which will quench all that is hostile to the spirit of purity and love and brotherhood and vitalise all that is dormant, and to substitute its stable basis of a true faith in God for the superstitious beliefs or mere conventions on which alone they may have come to rest.

3. The same is true of many other departments of human life.

Paul does not confine his comprehensive call to admiration and approval to the field of the true, the honourable, the just, and the pure. He says, 'Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report.' He does not simply say, 'if there be any virtue,' but also 'if there be any praise, think on these things.' That seems to reach out to all the gifts of civilisation and culture. It includes the world of nature, the world of research and discovery

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 182 ff.

and invention, the world of art and physical culture, the whole field of benevolence and philanthropy, the world of education and economics and commercial enterprise, the world of social intercourse, of sport and recreation. I do not mean to imply in naming these as a group apart, that these are entirely outwith the field of ethics. The gravest offences in several of these directions, bringing all of them into disrepute and creating general suspicion of them in Christian minds, have been due to the fond idea that moral considerations in their case might be left behind,—research, for instance, pursued without regard to sufferings inflicted; art pursued purely for art's sake; recreation prostituted to the greed of gain, and so on. But these offences are not to blind the Christian to the fact that in the honest pursuit of any of these fields of activity there is a proper and approved sphere for a Christian to occupy. These are not alien to Christianity. They are creatures of God, and 'every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.' They are in the closest affinity with Christianity.

There is no necessary antagonism, for instance, between the occupations of an Edison, say, a man who patiently sets himself to study the laws of electricity and to apply them to the service of his fellows, and a whole-hearted devotion to Jesus Christ as his Lord and Master. The laws he is studying are God's laws; the services he hopes to render to his fellows are dictated by more than self-interest. They have at the back of them the second great commandment, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Again, it is not only a pagan that can look with admiration on the beauty of God's world. Nay, it has required Christianity to provide us with a Wordsworth. Great as art was in the hands of the Greeks, and with them this goal was reached, 'the Truth of Man, as by God first spoken . . . was reuttered,' still Browning[1] is right when he pleads that Christian art had something more to teach. The ideal is all very well. The sight of it is humbling and too often issues in despair. But we want to know what we are, 'become self-acquainters . . . bring the invisible full into play,' and learn what we

[1] *Old Pictures in Florence.*

may aspire to and hope to become, if not in time, at any rate in eternity. And who have done that service for men? Artists, Christian artists, the men who, thinking on what was most truly lovely, gave art a new birth under Christian influences, and sent it off on higher flights in a Michael Angelo, a Fra Angelico, a Raphael, than ever a Phidias or a Praxiteles achieved or attempted. But must Michael Angelo have no dealings with Phidias? Is there an impassable barrier between Greek and Christian? No; whatsoever things are lovely, Christians think on these things.

Or in a humbler sphere, there are men who devote their lives to providing entertainment for their fellows. Is that necessarily a degrading occupation, unworthy of a Christian? Is there nothing to be said of laughter but that it is mad? Then what of the laughter of God, what of the smile that must have been on the sunny face of Jesus to attract the children to Him? No, wholesome humour—and Arthur C. Benson says, 'There are not three Christian virtues, but four—Faith, Hope, Charity and Humour!'—pure, wholesome humour wherever you find it, in a diverting story, an amusing

companion, or the pages of *Punch*, is something of good report, and has its affinity with the genial spirit of Christianity. For laughter comes from God,

> 'Who has within Himself the secret springs
> Of all the lovely, causeless, unclaimed things,
> And loves them in His very heart of hearts.'[1]

The truth is, the Spirit of God is not bound. He is not given by measure. He has been working ever since at first He brooded over the chaos of things and brought order out of confusion. And if in earliest days He taught Tubal Cain to work the forge, and Jubal to string the lyre, and Bezaleel to work in brass and iron, so as to be fit to build the tabernacle, and if Hiram's skill was needed from pagan Tyre to build the Temple in Jerusalem, surely the Christian is right if he sees something akin to the leading of the Spirit within himself in every worthy effort, aspiration, achievement, in every noble task accomplished, in every reverent gesture, word, or thought wherever he meets it, and regards it not as alien but allied to the cause of the Lord he serves.

[1] T. E. Brown, *The Laugh*.

THE CHARACTERISTIC VIRTUES OF CHRISTIANITY

'Faith, Hope, Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is Charity.'—1 Cor. xiii. 13.

CHAPTER XII

THE CHARACTERISTIC VIRTUES OF CHRISTIANITY

CHRISTIANITY claims affinity with everything that is good. A Christian recognises as a kindred spirit every man of virtuous life and lofty aspiration whatever his creed. Yet that is not to say that there is no difference between them. There is a subtle something more about a Christian, palpable alike to the Christian and to the outsider. It is the presence and predominance in him of these three graces, Faith, Hope, Charity, and especially Charity. Not that you never find those three in others than Christians. You do; but then it is spasmodic, and comes always more or less as a welcome surprise. With the true Christian these graces are or should be habitual. Indeed, in days when men are casting about for a new way of stating the Christian creed, for deciding whether a man is a Christian or not, perhaps the best

and surest test, truest also to the spirit of the Founder of Christianity, would be, not to attach much importance to words, but to scan a man's life for these three, and wherever these are found predominant, label that 'Christian.' All other virtues are common property. The Christian must possess them as much as any other man. He is no Christian who is destitute of them. But to possess them does not make him a Christian. This is what is distinctive—faith, hope, charity.

1. First of all, let us notice what these virtues severally are.

No one of them is an entire novelty, unheard of till Christianity appeared, unrecognised outside the pale of Christendom. But till Christ lifted up His testimony, neither faith, hope, nor love was regarded as of primary significance in things religious, or as of much moment in the relations of man to man. Fear and submission to fate were far more insisted on than faith in God. Hope was certainly left to mortals when every other blessing was blown from the box opened by inquisitive Pandora; but how little its content! And as for charity or love, Christianity had to

rescue the whole idea from polluting associations, discard all the current terms, and if not coin a new word, at least reissue one little used, stamped afresh in the mint of Christ, to convey its glowing thoughts on this motive power in the world of life and religion.

(*a*) Faith has already claimed our attention in its aspect as the required response to God's provision of salvation. And in that connection it may be sufficient to recall Lemonnier's striking description of faith, 'that blind faith which is the supreme form of vision'; or Froude's way of putting it, who says, 'The faith which Luther himself would have described as the faith that saves, is the faith that, beyond all things and always, truth is the most precious of possessions and truthfulness the most precious of qualities; that when truth calls, whatever the consequences, a brave man is bound to follow.' Froude is very nearly right. Only the Christian is quite sure that truth, on which Froude lays such stress, is only reached in the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ which is eternal life. But the note in Froude's words that is supremely true is the last word. Christian faith is nothing if it is

not practical. The only faith which Christ values is faith that shows itself in works. Whether the faith be directed towards God or towards our fellow-men — and faith is the attitude the Christian assumes towards both —it must be practical. It acts on what it believes. It counts on those whom it trusts. God's attitude towards men, the way He treats them, taking them back into His confidence, offering to let bygones be bygones and blot out their past, restoring their self-respect by putting them on their honour, engenders a like spirit in those who come to Him as they recognise Him in Christ. They trust Him, and as for their fellows, with their eyes open to possibilities of good, they take the risks and trust them too.

(*b*) Turning to the second of the Christian virtues, may it not be said that hope is the colour with which the Christian paints the future? However black the outlook, the Christian detects a ray of sunshine there, and he knows that in time the clouds will roll away, the sunshine spread, and bathe in glory all the scene. But, it is asked, is this not a mere matter of temperament, involving no question of morals?

Is it not a misnomer to include this among the virtues? The answer is both yes and no. Superficially, this is a matter of temperament. There is a naturally hopeful disposition, the sanguine nature, which is always counting its chickens before they are hatched. And when the hopefulness has no deeper basis than temperament, it has little moral value, may indeed be a minus quantity morally and a serious danger. Christian hopefulness is something more than temperament. It is deep based in confidence in God. It sees Him at the back of everything. It does not ignore the evils, the difficulties, the dangers. It is quite alive to the malignity of sin. But it says that is not the whole story. God is there, and goodness must and shall triumph. A man is not loyal to God, he is thinking unworthily of God, if he does not deliberately repress misgiving and regard the future with hope. Hope thus becomes a duty. It is the way in which the Christian ought to look at the future. It is the only attitude that is consonant with Christ's message to the woebegone, despairing children of men, if it is to merit its name of gospel—good news, glad tidings of great joy.

(*c*) And now for the greatest of the three, charity or Christian love. It is no use studying Greek or Latin to find out what Christian love is. The dictionaries to consult here are our own hearts in relation to our nearest and dearest, the thirteenth chapter of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, and John's pregnant phrase, 'God is love.' Christian love is the feeling begotten in our hearts towards God and towards our fellow-men by the penetration into our hearts of the sense of the love of God to us when He gave His Son to die for us. 'Herein was love, not that we loved God, but that He did love us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins . . . we love because He first loved us.' That is at once the natural and the supernatural history of Christian love.

Nothing suggests better what Christian love is than Giotto's drawing of 'Charity' in Padua. It is a corrective to all that misconception of love which left room for such a phrase as 'cold as charity.' Here is how Ruskin describes the drawing: 'Usually Charity is nursing children or giving money. Giotto thinks there is little charity in nursing children; bears and wolves do that for their little ones; and less still in

giving money. His Charity stands trampling upon bags of gold—has no use for them. She gives only corn and flowers (with her right hand); and God's angel (to whom she looks) gives her, not even these—but a Heart.'[1]

There is a word of caution needed here, however. There is a temptation to treat charity, love, as an essentially feminine grace, lacking in manliness, very attractive in a woman, but scarcely the proper distinguishing feature for a man; and such an idea is used to the disparagement of Christianity if this is its favourite virtue. As a corrective, listen to what Robertson of Brighton says about that position—and Ruskin agrees with him—and if ever there was a man every inch a man it was F. W. Robertson. Commenting on 1 Cor. xiii. he says, 'In it Paul describes the character of a true gentleman.' Ruskin says, 'Gentleness may be defined as the Habit or State of Love . . . and is the virtue which distinguishes gentlemen from churls.'[2] There need be no doubt, therefore, as to the need for grit and strength in true Christian love. But those who claim the names of gentleman and lady—and all Christians should

[1] *Fors Clavigera*, i. 144. [2] *Op. cit.*, ii. 348.

be entitled to them—have to notice that the crown of character which gives the right to the name is not what calls itself honour, or blood, is not hauteur, self-sufficiency, exclusiveness, relieved by condescension and what is supposed to be *savoir faire*. That is mere snobbishness, the devil's parody on Christian gentility. It is not even affability, courtesy, generosity, which may be only superficial, a thing of manners and no more. The crown of character is a heart warm, frank, genial, self-forgetful, strong to serve even to self-sacrifice, but free from all mawkishness because the love that is in it is 'approved by conscience, qualified by goodness, and obedient to the moral law.'[1] This love, this Christian love, is the product, not merely of admiration for the character of Christ, but of indebtedness to His Cross. In it 'the sentimentality of the friend of Jesus receives correction, elevation, and expansion by the humility of the sinner and the devotion of the saved.'[2] The love springs, as Paul says, from the constraint of the love of Christ.

[1] Illingworth, *Christian Character*, p. 96.
[2] Garvie, *The Christian Personality*, p. 67.

2. It may be worth while to devote a few words to the relation of the Christian graces to the four cardinal virtues of the ancients.

Chesterton, in his book called *Heretics*,[1] has a very interesting passage, in which he makes such a comparison. In his own paradoxical way he says that the pagan virtues are the sad virtues, and faith, hope, and charity the gay and exuberant virtues, and that the pagan virtues are the reasonable virtues, while the Christian virtues are as unreasonable as they can be. There is a great deal in that. And people at any rate believe it with regard to faith. They revel in scorn of faith, and magnify the contrast between faith and reason. We have seen already how wide of the mark that is. But so far as there is any truth in it, is charity or hope any more reasonable than faith? Isn't the crowning contrast between justice, say, and charity, just this, that justice gives a man what he deserves, charity gives him what he does not deserve? Prudence again counts the risks and abandons the desperate cause. Hope on the contrary sets out with Mark Tapley in search of really hope-

[1] P. 157 ff.

less situations in which still to remain cheerful, where there is 'some credit in being jolly.' That is what Chesterton means by his paradox. And it is just what might be expected in the characteristic Christian virtues. Christianity is God's provision for a world in desperate case. There ordinary virtues are not enough to equip the men who are to face it and checkmate the world's unreason. They want characters strong enough to look through and beyond the cross purposes of the visible; strong enough to bear the strain of present disaster, endure as seeing Him who is invisible, and wait with patience for the coming good; strong enough to bear with the wandering and the erring, cast a cloak over their ill-doings, and see them still with eyes of yearning, meet them still with hands to help. What is equal to this demand but the spirit like God's own that sees the worst and yet forbears—faith, hope, charity?

Illingworth draws still another distinction. He says, 'Faith, Hope, and Charity are not special virtues like justice or fortitude, but spiritual dispositions which penetrate the entire personality, and qualify its every thought

and act.'[1] That is to say, there are whole stretches of life where the old pagan cardinal virtues have no opportunity to come into play. In the ordinary day's work there are often times when there is no particular call for justice, prudence, temperance, fortitude; or if there is, it is in such a limited degree that it seems rather a stretch of imagination to make much of them. They are special virtues for special occasions. But faith, hope, and charity! They are woven into a man's whole way of living and thinking. Every day calls for them. Life at anything but low levels is impossible without them. How is a man to rise above the trivialities of life, its sordidness, its repulsiveness; how is he to keep in tune with the infinite, if he is not constantly falling back on the new spirit engendered in him by Christ, of which these are the distinctive notes? This is closely associated with the true conception of religion which Christianity has brought in. Paganism thought of religion as a sort of water-tight compartment of life in which provision was made for a certain round of rites and ceremonies on which the gods set store but

[1] *Christian Character*, p. 64 ff.

which had no bearing on a man's character for good or ill. But men are everywhere discovering—and it is Christianity that is forcing home the discovery—that religion is primarily an affair of action and of the whole man. Head, heart, conscience, will, leg, hand—God claims them all. And religion calls for the virtues that correspond, and these are these three, faith, hope, and charity—all God inspired.

'The faith by which we see Him,
The hope in which we yearn,
The love that through all troubles
To Him alone will turn,—

What are they but the heralds
To lead us to His sight,
What are they save the effluence
Of uncreated light?'

3. A third matter deserves consideration. What is the relation of faith, hope, and charity to one another?

It is very significant that it is Paul who unhesitatingly puts love at the head. 'The greatest of these is charity.' That is the deliberate judgment of a man who saw with a penetration that has never been equalled, far less excelled, the stupendous possibilities of faith, who learned the lesson which Christ taught

on that matter as no other learned it. But his perception of the power of faith never obscured for one moment in his eyes the lustre of love.

The reason why Paul puts love at the head is not the very mechanical and prosaic one suggested in the paraphrase, that love has the priority because faith and hope exhaust their possibilities on earth, while love maintains its place to all eternity: 'saints for ever love.' Paul was no such dry doctrinaire as to institute a comparison of that kind. There they are, he says, and the value of each is permanent, but love is the greatest. And who does not agree with Paul? Be their term for time or for eternity, isn't Paul right? Nobody denies the moral energy of faith. Nobody belittles the redemptive impulse imparted by hope. Nobody thinks much of the man's character where faith and hope are lacking, or expects much of him. But take away love, and 'though I have faith so that I could remove mountains, I am nothing'; without love the only hope which will remain is a hope that will sooner or later leave me ashamed. Love is the *sine qua non.*

Recall the history of Christianity, and where have some of the gravest disasters come from? Has it not been from pitting grace against grace, or exalting faith with charity left out? Then faith itself has shrivelled into a mere affair of the intellect, lost all moral character, and the tragedy of Faith has been enacted which G. F. Watts has depicted with such power in his famous picture. There she sits, a noble figure, disillusioned, filled with remorse, with the sword she had misguidedly drawn to help the good cause sheathed on her knee, her bloodstained feet lapped by, but staining, the cleansing water of life. She sees her mistake in having ever imagined that Christ's cause could really be advanced by persecution; and her sorrow is bitter. What saves her? Hope is by her side. And on her right hand is another figure, putting away the sword, telling of a new way of conquest, bringing peace to Faith's distraught heart; and this is Love. The greatest of these is Love.[1]

The truth is, Love is greatest because she includes everything else, is in all in germ, and makes up for many a deficiency.

[1] Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art*, p. 128 f.

In another sense than James intended, Charity covers a multitude of sins. She does it in the man who practises it as well as in the sinner whose faults are forgivingly screened. One speaks of the uplifting hopefulness of Jane Eyre, her Christ-like power of recognising the ardent spirit of love behind gross faults, both of the animal and the intellectual nature. But we feel that that hopefulness is just another name for love. Faith and hope need the inspiration of love, Christian love, to make them Christian. Paul, seemingly unconsciously, weaves the graces together as he seeks adequately to sing the praises of the chief of them, 'Charity believeth all things, hopeth all things.' Indeed he sums it all up in this: 'Charity never faileth.' Even Faith is sometimes nonplussed, awakens no response. Its lofty vision seems unintelligible to earthbound hearts. Hope paints her brightest pictures; repeated Disappointment only asks incredulously, will they ever come true. But Love puts her arms round the very devil's outcasts, kisses the tears from the disconsolate cheeks; and where Faith and Hope stood helpless, Love never fails; Love succeeds.

John Knox, in his *History of the Reformation*, has preserved a beautiful comparison of faith, hope, and charity by Patrick Hamilton, the Scottish martyr.[1] Says Hamilton: 'Faith cometh of the Word of God, Hope cometh of Faith, and Charity springeth of them both. Faith believes the Word, Hope trusteth after that which is promised by the Word, and Charity doeth good unto her neighbour, through the love which she hath to God, and gladness that is within herself. Faith looketh to God and His word; Hope looketh unto His gift and reward; Charity looketh unto her neighbour's profit. Faith receiveth God; Hope receiveth His reward; Charity looketh to her neighbour with a glad heart, and that without any respect of reward. Faith pertaineth to God only; Hope to His reward, and Charity to her neighbour.' Were one anxious to be critical there are statements there that require correction. But what is said of Charity needs none, and in the light of its grand unselfishness we say, the greatest is Charity. We agree with Henry Ward Beecher that 'Love is the foundation in the teaching and practice of

[1] Book 1.

life.' We feel that Phillips Brooks gave the right answer to the blind deaf mute, Helen Keller, that wonderful nature brought by the patient devotion of her teacher out of the prison-house of her terrible isolation into contact with the world but only to find it often as perplexing as it was pleasing. She was puzzled for one thing to know why there were so many religions. Said Bishop Brooks, 'There is one universal religion, Helen, the religion of love. Love your Heavenly Father with your whole heart and soul; love every child of God as much as ever you can, remember that the possibilities of good are greater than the possibilities of evil, and you have the key to heaven.' Isn't that true? Wasn't that just what Christ Himself said?

Paul, who never discussed any doctrine without tracing it out into its practical issues, sums up the case for love's supreme place in the world of morals in this neat little syllogism: 'Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.' All morality runs up into this: 'Thou shalt love—love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and strength and mind, and thy neigh-

bour as thyself.' That is the essence of the Christian religion and morality; that is the equipment for living the Christian life, for fulfilling the calling of a Christian man. The writer was never more impressed with this than once when he heard Donald Fraser, the zealous young missionary to Livingstonia, praying in the little church in Rothiemurchus Forest for brother missionaries in foreign lands. His words were few and simple, but for what did he pray for them? That they might have in ever larger measure faith, hope, and charity. It was an education in Christian ethics, a revelation of the inner consciousness of the missionary heart, to hear a prayer like that from one of them. It needs no comment, only reverent sympathetic reflection, to realise why thus he prayed, to learn from it how great are these three, and yet to feel how true it is, the greatest of these is Charity.

THE LAW OF LIFE IN CHRISTIANITY—LIBERTY

'The Perfect Law of Liberty.'—JAMES i. 25.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LAW OF LIFE IN CHRISTIANITY—LIBERTY

THERE is no more inspiring word in human speech than Freedom, Liberty. It expresses an instinctive craving of the human heart. It awakens a responsive echo in the human breast. Only the tyrant, the craven, the sycophant, are deaf to its call. It has been the battle-cry in the most memorable struggles in the world's history. It is the goal of humanity's efforts in every field of activity. It was for liberty Israel defied Pharaoh and faced the perils of the Red Sea and the wanderings of the wilderness. It was for liberty the Greeks fell at Thermopylae, the Swiss took their stand at Sempach, the Scots fought at Bannockburn, careless of the odds against them. It was for freedom, freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of the press,

Erasmus, Galileo, Milton, each played his part. The Renaissance, the Reformation, the French Revolution, were all great movements for liberty. It matters not what be the field, the heart of man cries out against every form of tyranny, the bondage that enslaves men's bodies, or the bondage more terrible still that tyrannises over men's minds and souls. In fetters the heart cannot beat true. Man cannot fulfil the end of his being. To reach that, he must be free. Says Carlyle, 'Great is the moment, when tidings of freedom reach us; when the long enthralled soul, from amid its chains and squalid stagnancy, arises, were it still only in blindness and bewilderment, and swears by Him that made it that it will be free. . . . It is the deep commandment, dimmer or clearer, of our whole being to be free. Freedom is the one purport, wisely aimed at or unwisely, of all man's struggles, toilings, and sufferings, in this Earth.'[1]

Curiously enough, it has often been a taunt levelled at the Church — and with a certain measure of justification—that it stands in opposition to this noble and legitimate instinct of

[1] Carlyle, *French Revolution*, Bk. v. ch. 5.

the human heart. If that is true, then a great error has been committed in direct antagonism to the spirit of the Gospel. The Gospel was announced by the Lord in terms of liberty: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me . . . to preach deliverance to the captive . . . to set at liberty them that are bruised.' The Christ appeared as the Liberator, the Emancipator.

> 'He came to break oppression,
> To set the captive free,
> To take away transgression
> And rule in equity.'

Note the third line—'to take away transgression'—for it is of the essence of the Christian conception of liberty, and we must return to it. But it is important to notice generally that the Christian religion is in entire accord with this noble aspiration of the human heart. If Christianity is to understand itself aright, it must see that liberty is of the very essence of its own constitution. Freedom is the law of the Christian life. The flower of the Christian life can never blossom in its perfection till it expands in the congenial atmosphere of perfect liberty.

All this is the best answer to a challenge

which in the name of philosophy starts up to question this whole impulse of the human heart. Professing to probe more deeply than the thoughtless crowd takes time to do, it says man is not and never can be free. He is the creature of circumstance, the slave of environment and heredity; he is caught in the links of a predetermined chain; he is under the control of motives and influences which determine his actions with an exactitude and a precision which he cannot evade; his fancied freedom is a fond imagination. Break bonds as you will of creed, convention, enactment, slavery, there remains a final compulsiter, and man is a slave in spite of you. Now, is this philosophy; or is it sophistry, a mere logomachy? Whatever it is, common-sense says it is nonsense. It is a waste of time to discuss it. The world moves on and leaves the thinking that has nothing better than this to tell it, standing like the ass between two haystacks whose attractions were so evenly balanced that it died of starvation for lack of a motive strong enough to make it choose a bite from the one rather than the other. Men know they are free, or have a right to freedom, and the very

sophist himself ignores his theories when it comes to practice.

It is important to notice that there are two kinds of freedom. There is an outer freedom and an inner, just as there is an outer and an inner bondage. The outer is in each case the more obvious. The slavery that holds the body captive is more quickly detected than the tyranny that enthralls the spirit. A man's limbs may be free. He may have every right of the freeborn and yet have the spirit of a slave, held captive in the tyranny of custom, or dread, or degrading habit. A man, on the other hand, may be a prisoner, with a spirit indomitable, with a liberty within, which tyrants cannot quell. And this inner liberty is the matter of prime importance. Socrates and the Stoics recognised that, as they asserted their right to think their own thoughts in spite of bolts and bars. The revolt of Reason against intolerant Dogma in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was guided by the same instinct. Rousseau, again, 'revolted against the cold tyranny of the intellect, and emancipated the religious emotion, restored the free and energetic life of the individual to lawful recognition,

and made it once more the centre of that imaginative and spiritual existence without which we live in a universe which has no sun by day nor any star by night.'[1] Nay, look into the spirit at the back of wars of independence and risings of slaves to be rid of their fetters and secure civil liberties, and it will be found that the leaders, at any rate, were always conscious of a right of every man to something more still, of which outward liberty was only the corollary; namely, to be himself, to live his own life, to obey his own spiritual convictions. Men contend for their right to more than Burns sings of in his Scottish pæan of freedom. They want ultimately, like the Pilgrim Fathers, 'Freedom to worship God.' This is, in its highest terms, the one right man has from nature, as Mazzini maintains, even if he have no other. He has the right of 'liberating himself from every obstacle impeding his free fulfilment of his own duties.'[2] But that is something spiritual. It demands, in the first instance, the emancipation of the inner man. It is men with the free spirit who fight for freedom.

[1] Morley, *Rousseau*, ii. 267. [2] *M. Renan and France*, i.

Notice the significance of this for Christianity and of Christianity for this. The gospel is what man needs if he will be free. It is the gospel which becomes 'the religion of ethical liberation, for in its very centre lies the belief in the unfettering of the will for good by the forgiveness of sins.'[1] Martin Luther, who never beats about the bush, gives a very straight answer to the question, Where lie the roots of liberty? In a brief treatise on 'The Liberty of a Christian Man,' a most concise and illuminating statement of the essence and spirit of Christianity, he says, in a word, that the foundation of all true freedom lies in the deliverance of the soul from the bondage of sin through faith in the finished work of Christ. The bondage of sin, the bondage of the idea that the only way to get quit of sin is by one's own efforts, and that the only way to keep right with God is by punctilious attention to an endless array of laws, rules, and forms, and the bondage of the fearful sense of impotence in the face of this demand, is the most paralysing force that ever laid its hand on man. From that the gospel sets a man free. By

[1] Bousset, *Jesus*, p. 162.

faith in Christ's finished work he gets rid of this incubus of guilt, depravity, and helplessness, and he steps out with a new life to breathe the free air of the children of God. This deliverance at the heart of his being transforms his whole nature, and he rises to claim his birthright in every direction.

Where did Luther learn this? It was the truth of Christ, which Rome had concealed from the eyes of men for centuries in order to impose on them the tyranny of her own will and serve her own base ends. Luther learned it from Paul and a greater than Paul, Paul's Master, our Lord. Our Saviour, speaking to men of the stock of Abraham, favourably disposed towards Himself, but, above everything, proud of their pure descent, said to them once: 'If ye continue in My words, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' They heard it with a start, opened their eyes in surprise. 'Make you free'—had they heard aright? They were free. No, says Christ. Freedom is not a matter of civil status or racial descent; freedom belongs to the spirit, and sin, prejudice, pride, make it a slave; until

the spirit is free, man is a slave. Paul, one of the very type that could not brook the plain words of Christ, in time discovered how true they were. When he wrote to the Romans, he cast the vivid sidelight of his own experience upon it, as he depicted to them the struggle through which alone the possession and practice of freedom could be reached. The ear of the listener seems to catch in his words the panting of the exhausted spirit taxed to the utmost in its effort to be free: 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me? . . . I thank my God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' And then, when he has recovered his breath, in calmer tones he explains how. 'God's Son has come and condemned sin in the flesh; and the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.' The Christian is left in no doubt as to where liberty, the widest, truest, fullest, comes from. 'Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.'

Liberty is a right of man from God's hand, then, a right which has been discovered for us by Christ. But, as Dr. John Ker says, 'there is great danger in contending for freedom,

either civil or religious, of our making it the end instead of the means.'[1] Anthony Trollope had a novel called *What will He do with It?* That is the question for every man who has gained his freedom. What will he do with it? If it is not recognised speedily that freedom is more than anything else a constant opportunity, it will degenerate into licence. If men do not realise that there is a law of liberty, they will become mere libertines, who, wearing the name of freedom, are the most degraded slaves. No, there are great calls awaiting a man, the call of truth, the call of righteousness, as soon as he gains his freedom. And as Dr. Denney says, 'A man must be perfectly free'—why?—'that the whole weight of his responsibilities may come upon him. Liberty is the correlative of responsibility?'[2] A free man must address himself to the knowing of the truth that he may form proper judgments. He must consider the will of God that he may choose and pursue worthy ideals. Self kicks at these, as though they were new fetters, an infringement of freedom of thought, a restraint

[1] *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, p. 42.
[2] *Death of Christ*, p. 191.

on the natural impulses. It were well for a man in this temper to consider the prayer with which the late Master of Balliol, Professor Edward Caird, used every morning to open his class for the study of Moral Philosophy: 'Almighty and most merciful God, who hast created us for Thyself so that we can find rest only in Thee, grant unto us purity of heart and strength of purpose, so that no selfish passion may hinder us from knowing Thy will, and no weakness from doing it, that in Thy light we may see light, and in Thy service find perfect freedom, through the spirit of Christ.' 'For,' says St. Francis de Sales, 'the liberty of beloved children . . . is a thorough detachment from all things in order to follow God's recognised will.'[1]

Now we are beginning to understand what is meant when it is said that liberty is the law of the Christian life. When James speaks of 'the perfect law of liberty' it sounds an oxymoron, a paradox. But the student of Christianity must be prepared for paradox. He will hear of 'the Will to Believe,' 'the Duty of Love,' as well as 'the Law of Liberty.' Each

[1] *Spiritual Letters*, p. 60.

is a paradox; but it is a truth. Christianity, knowing the human heart as it does, recognises that will plays a part in belief, and duty a part in love, which the headstrong would like to deny. And so too with liberty; it has its laws, and the Christian must learn them.

Still, it is necessary to remember that there are laws and laws. There are laws, like the Game Laws, which have no inherent righteousness about them, depend on the arbitrary enactment of men, and infringement of which begets no sense of moral default. And any law when regarded simply in the letter of it, degenerates into the same category. But there are other laws, like the laws of nature. They are the laws of our being, such as the laws of growth, the laws of health, the laws of thought. They are the conditions of right living and thinking. So far as life is concerned, it is a case of obey them and live, disobey them and die. Obedience to the first type has no moral significance. The most punctilious attention may leave a man either a slave in spirit or a martinet. Obedience to the second, on the contrary, is not so much a matter of duty; it

is a matter of life, of response to the call of nature at its truest and best. Where law enters into liberty, it is of this class. Under its guidance and in line with its behests alone can the Christian life develop properly and as God intended it. The Christian life in its perfection is not a matter of attention to a mass of decrees, statutes, enactments, even of God Himself. It is the steady response of the renewed nature to the call and the prompting of the free, divine spirit of sonship which God has implanted within.

Mr. Gladstone once said that it is liberty alone that fits men for liberty.[1] But that has to be taken with a qualification. Men have to be educated for liberty. Paul saw clearly enough that the *régime* of the old law had a place. It was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ: it was the statement in detail of the law of God in many of its applications. And liberty from the law does not mean liberty to neglect the will of God. Liberty means freedom from everything that hinders from keeping it. The Law's failure was not in declaring the will of God, but in its incapacity

[1] Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, iii. 58.

to incite men to keep it. Freedom is not freedom without the law, but freedom within it. The illustration has been used of a child and a piano. When is he free with reference to it? When he is utterly ignorant of music he may crash the notes at will, and that may be called freedom. But the result—is it music? No: he has not reached freedom till after years of painful practice he has every note and chord and run and scale at command, and then place any piece of music before him, and to play it is no task but a pleasure. And the reason? He is master of the instrument; he is at liberty among its keys. He knows its every law, and in obedience to them he has unalloyed delight, where once he was cribbed and confined.

This is the transformation Jeremiah had in view when he spoke of God's great purpose to put His law in the inward parts and write it in the heart. 'It implies,' says Dr. Macgregor, 'a kind of instinct of the will of God by which a man can guide himself apart from distinct directions, some better sense of what is noble in conduct.'[1] It could not be better put

[1] *Jesus Christ the Son of God*, p. 36.

than that. When a man has been long in the school of Christ; when he has meditated as the Psalmist who wrote the 119th Psalm had meditated on the law of God, until its marvellous beauty and grace and symmetry evoked a genuine wonder and delight; when he has studied the example of Christ, until the very mind of Christ seems to be laid bare before his loving, adoring eye, he does not think of law and commandment when a call to action comes. He knows instinctively what to do. He never asks, Is this right or wrong? It has ceased to be a question of what is permitted and what is commanded. He acts not by law but by inspiration. He lives by principles, not by enactments. The right has become second nature. He verifies the conviction of the Manx poet, that 'if the deep roots of the spiritual life are strong and healthy, it cannot go wrong with the moral or the intellectual being.'[1] Of course he recognises the limitations on the exercise of liberty which Christian love, not law, imposes. He must not impinge on the freedom of another, nor imperil the conscience of his brother by tempting him to

[1] *Poems of T. E. Brown*, Introd., xxii.

act beyond the limits of what his faith permits. He takes no liberties with himself or suffers no indulgences that may degenerate into evil habits. But these are no interferences with his liberty; they are its safeguards.

What is implied in liberty is suggested by a favourite way of speaking among the old divines. There were times of which they said of preaching and of prayer, they had no liberty. At other times it was the very opposite. Words, the right words, words apposite, forceful, pleading, and persuasive, came spontaneously. So it is with a man who has entered into and enjoys the liberty of the Christian life. He finds, as the Psalmist says, that God's commandment is exceeding broad. He feels like a man who enjoys the full confidence of his employers. How does he sometimes describe his position? Doesn't he say this, 'They have perfect confidence in me; I can do what I like'? But ask Joseph if that means licence to play havoc with all that is sacred—'How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?' So it is with the man who has realised that liberty is the law of the Christian life. The service of

God takes on a new character. There are rules of service. There are laws of God. But for a man, trusting in Christ and enjoying God's restored favour and confidence, these are no longer irksome, alien impositions. They are self-assumed and self-imposed and gladly welcomed as a guide to tell how to do aright the thing he would do; namely, please God and fulfil His will. Here is liberty in the heart, and that, says Amiel, 'is the joy of the daughters of God, baptized with the Holy Ghost.'[1]

It is here as it is in a well-ordered home, where parents and children understand each other. Love makes obedience sweet. Laws in such a home are obeyed instinctively and conformed to with pleasure. All walk at liberty. So it is in the family of God. No wonder liberty is the law of the Christian life! The Christian life is life in the ideal relationship, and that it has been seen already is the relation of children of God. As Paul points out, the crowning distinction of the Christian life is that it is the life of a son and not of a slave or servant, the free service

[1] Amiel, *Journal*, p. 33.

of a loving, loyal, filial heart, not the mere performance of detailed duty, still done by a slave, no matter how exactly done. This is what God delights in. This is what God created man to obtain. It was to make this possible He endued man with free will. It was His deepest disappointment when man used that free will only to flout Him and resist Him. It is God's delight when man, returned to his right mind, at last gives Him gladly and freely the childlike service for which He craves. And a child of God feels that he has mastered the meaning of life, penetrated its inmost secret, broken every fetter, launched out into true liberty, when the admired and coveted practice of Christ begins to become second nature to himself, and he can truly say, 'I delight to do Thy will; Thy law is within my heart.'

THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL IN THE INDIVIDUAL

'A perfect man . . . the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.'—EPH. iv. 13.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL IN THE INDIVIDUAL

It might seem the simplest thing in the world to answer Peter's question to believers, 'What manner of persons ought ye to be?' Paul has put it in a single phrase. Each should be 'a perfect man, . . . the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' But having said that, difficulty immediately emerges. Who shall gauge that measure? It runs out into infinity. Where shall we find it reproduced? The best of Christians is only an approximation. A catalogue of virtues will not exhaust or express it. For the secret of Christianity is a subtle something that fuses them and moulds them into one. Here the whole is something greater than the sum of all its parts.

1. It is well, therefore, first of all to consider the difficulty of presenting the Christian ideal.

Christ is the ideal, the fullness of Christ. True. Is not the simplest way to proceed, then, to summarise His character? Yes, if any one could do it. But no summary of that matchless character can ever do justice to it. Paul has attempted it in one direction, and he has given it up. He prays that men may know the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of Christ—but it is impossible: 'it passeth knowledge.' The very Gospels are but epitomes, and they succeed in conveying an unmistakable impression. Yet more than anything else they awake a longing. They leave us unsatisfied. We want Himself. Even if one could succeed here in presenting the ideal by reproducing Christ, it is questionable what the result would be. Might not men gaze ndeed in wonder and adoration, but overwhelmed and oppressed by the sense of the unattainable, give up any attempt to attain in despair? Is there not an advantage, hinted at in John's pregnant words, in leaving it more or less veiled? 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.' Oh for the

vision splendid! But 'he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself as He is pure.'

To look for a more practicable example of the ideal among lesser lights is not more encouraging. Nay, it is distinctly disappointing. There is not a perfect specimen among all the lives called Christian. Among the Old Testament anticipations of it we hear with something of a shock that Abraham was called the Friend of God, that God was content to be known as the God of the worm Jacob, that David was a man after God's own heart. And what of the whole calendar of saints? No one can fail to admire the conscientiousness of James, the geniality of Peter, the boundless faith and restless zeal of Paul, the pure flame of the love of John; but these do not blind us to their defects. Justin, Ambrose, Monica, Augustine, Chrysostom, Francis, Bernard, Louis, Santa Teresa, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley, Howard, Cairns; each has individual charm. But no one of them stands for all a Christian should be. They are approximations, and each more or less only in one particular direction, to what the perfect whole of the Christian life should be. Yet

this it is that relieves the shock, takes the sting out of what is sport for the Philistines; the inconsistencies, the blemishes, the worse than blemishes, the stains, that may be found in many a man who enjoys God's smile. No Christian is all a Christian should be. Every Christian is only an approximation. Every Christian is only a man in the making. In some there is no more than the rude block, the material, the rough outline; but there are possibilities visible to the penetrating eye of God, and already with this He is well pleased. Others are nearing perfection, but the patient artist hand knows where something still is needed. And so it is not in the unfinished work we must look for the ideal. We must be content to imagine the great thought in the divine mind, and remember that here we are in God's workshop, and not even in the pattern-room, but only among the rough castings.

'I thought of life, the outer and the inner,
As I was walking by the sea:
How vague, unshapen this and that, though thinner,
Yet hard and clear in its rigidity.
Then took I up the fragment of a shell
And saw its accurate loveliness
And searched its filmy lines, its pearly cell,
And all that keen contention to express

A finite thought. And then I recognised
God's working in the shell from root to rim,
And said :—"He works till He has realised—
O heaven ! If I could only work like Him !"[1]

We live in a day which is prone for unity. We are like Frederick the Great, insisting on one word answers to infinite questions. There are questions that cannot be answered in one word. The Christian ideal of human nature is one of them. When Paul starts to describe the fruit of the spirit, he runs into a list of lovely graces like the colours of the rainbow, but you feel as if there were no reason why he should stop where he does. You could add nine graces more, and even then your repertory would not be exhausted. Even when our Saviour describes the halo of Christian sainthood or blessedness, which consists, be it remarked, in what a man is, not in what he has, He cannot say all He would say in a single word, master of language though He was. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers, the pure in heart, yea, those who only aspire, who hunger and thirst after righteousness.' What does all this tell us but that the white light

[1] T. E. Brown, *Scarlett Rocks*.

of the Christian ideal is too strong for our human eyes. We must be content to study it in the spectrum into which its rays are broken. But we are not to allow ourselves to be deceived by this into imagining that it is something obscure, confused, complex. If the Christian ideal possesses one feature more strikingly than another it is simplicity, transparency, directness. This is the unmistakable note in the character of Jesus Christ. Study the broad outline. Note the niceties and details. The result is the impression of a finely balanced, nicely poised, delicately finished, entirely complete whole. It is a unity. It will act with no uncertainty in any circumstances. There is nothing double, dubious, dark. The cross currents of conflicting motives, contingencies, interests, may blur the moral issues for others. Ordinary men may be lost in the mazes of cunning and intrigue. Here is One whose eye is single and His whole body is full of light. The strength and safety as well as the singularity of the Christian ideal is that amid all its wealth and variety there is this unity, this simplicity. It is one thing. And yet, what

is that? Might I venture to say 'the Love of Truth and the Truth of Love?'

2. In the second place, however, it should be observed how much help is obtained by the method of contrast.

Nothing brings out the super-excellency of the Christian ideal like a comparison with any other ideal. For ideals are many. Men have always had ideals. Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship* is just a study in ideals. It is a matter of age, a matter of development. In history the ideal passes from gods and demigods to exceptional men. In a lifetime men meet the athletic ideal, the intellectual ideal, the artistic ideal, only on mature reflection to find them each inadequate. At their best each needs a plus or a minus to satisfy the Christian standard. They err by excess or defect. And the instinct which criticises is that in the human heart which at once recognises and responds to the perfection it finds in the ideal of Christ.

For instance, there is something grand about the Greek ideal man described by Aristotle, and by him called Great Soul. But contrast him even in his name with Mr. Greatheart,

Bunyan's ideal Christian, and you feel how Christianity has shifted the centre of gravity and given new character to the ideal. The one is magnanimous, if you will, but aristocratic, self-sufficient, self-conscious, aloof; the other is self-forgetful, busy meeting the needs of the common people, delighting to serve them as his friends. Again, there is something morally inspiring in the Horatian ideal, an old Roman, 'just and firm of purpose . . . undismayed though the world fall.'[1] And there is need of all the tenacity and intrepidity, which Horace extols, in the character of the Christian. But if that is all there is in your ideal, it stands like some great headland or like one of those pillars of rock on the Orkney coast, Yesnaby or the Old Man of Hoy, severed from the mainland, facing the ocean, hurling back its waves, but hard, isolated, defiant, inaccessible and cold. This is a poor substitute for the grace and strength of Christianity. Marcus Aurelius again has been held up as a living embodiment of what a man should be, and despite his persecuting zeal he was perhaps

[1] Horace, *Odes*, iii. 3.

even a more striking figure, a Stoic saint on the throne, than Epictetus, a stoic saint among the slaves—though in them both you have not pure Stoicism but Stoicism touched unconsciously by the ferment of Christianity. Yet to his excellencies must be added the humility which kneels and the charity that gives, before he will satisfy what the Christian heart has learned to look for. Another light on the uniqueness of the Christian ideal comes from Japan, whose ideal, Bushido, seems to stand so high. Said a cultured Japanese at a public meeting: 'I was loyal to my country's ideals and to Buddhism for what it had done for Japan, till by stress of circumstance I lived incognito as cook in a Christian home in America. Then I was greatly impressed with their happy, unselfish family life, and the peace that they gained from their religion. . . . I felt that a religion which could create such homes and make people so good must be worth adopting. I long to see such homes in Japan. If they can only be had by believing in Christianity and giving up Buddhism, then I say, "Let Buddhism go."'[1] So comparisons

[1] *Great Thoughts*, sixth series, v. 131.

might be multiplied, and the moral superiority and fullness of the Christian ideal would always appear. Even in the mere approximations to it which are the best that earth can offer in living embodiment to the eyes of men, the Christian ideal out-tops the world's best and truest with a gracious somewhat added all its own. And when it comes to the life as actually lived by Christ Himself, all else is dumb.

3. In the third place, let us attempt the presentation of some distinctive features.

Without attempting to summarise Christ's character, or to exhaust the features of the Christian ideal, it may be of advantage, guided by the life of Christ, to try and group some of those features which are apt to be overlooked or forgotten, because they are thought so obvious. There are features, of course, on which there is no need to dwell. There are the cardinal virtues, which must find a place in any worthy ideal, but which, as we have already seen, are among the affinities of Christianity. There are the characteristic Christian graces, Faith, Hope, and Charity, to which a whole chapter has been devoted. But here

are several other typical notes in the chord of Christian character.

(*a*) The ideal Christian is a man redeemed, and he never forgets that. This fact influences him in many ways. It marks a permanent difference in the pursuit and practice of the ideal between him and his Saviour, in whom the ideal was once embodied. What Christ always was he can only endeavour to become. It is also a permanent difference between him and the aspirants after any other ideal. Their efforts are all their own, and so their achievements may foster pride. He must always say, 'I 've been redeemed; by the grace of God I am what I am; what have I that I did not receive?' This memory effectually banishes all self-sufficiency, and keeps a man humble—an indispensable feature in the true Christian. Farther, it should make him teachable and reasonable, banish all opinionativeness. It should make him ready to learn, quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, anxious only to know how to avoid error and every wrong way, ever grateful to any one who can point him aright. Still more it is the spring of Christian joyousness, and joyousness is an inevitable

ingredient in the ideal of the Christian man. There is something wrong with the nature that calls itself Christian and yet is sombre, morose, lachrymose, dashed with sighs and groans and complaints. 'What!' you ask, 'should not the Christian always wear a mournful countenance at the painful memory of his sin and guilt?' No, emphatically no. That is not what he is to dwell on. That will only make him morbid. What he is to remember is that he has been delivered, his sins have been forgiven. That kindles cleansing fires which burn up self and sin and the love of them, and set the heart aglow with gratitude and love and joy in the Lord. With infinite thankfulness the believer says, 'Though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away and Thou comfortedst me.' The cordial embracing of the good news as good news engenders a joyousness which is not jaunty or light-headed, but which is a real, natural, unaffected light-heartedness and gladness of spirit, entering into the joy of the Lord.

(*b*) The ideal man, for a second thing, is himself, and not an imitation. He is not even an imitation of Christ. He is something better.

Like Christ, to be like Christ, is a beautiful phrase, a saintly aspiration. It often seems the simplest language in which to describe what the true Christian should be. But the ideal man in Christ is never a mere imitation. He is himself, with his own individuality of nature and disposition. He is an original, a character, and not a nonentity. His life is being shaped after the image of Jesus Christ, but the shaping is not from without, but from within. It is not imitation; it is inspiration. 'I live, yet not I: Christ liveth in me': that is his account of himself. He is the man that God made him with the distinctive gifts, temper, turn of thought and habit of life which God gave him. But all this is subdued to express the indwelling presence, as he and he alone can.

(*c*) Then again he is a whole man, and he stands on his feet. What is meant by saying that is that a Christian man recognises that he must make the best of his whole nature, body and soul as well as spirit. No side must be neglected if he is to be all a Christian should be. But he stands on his feet, not on his head. He estimates each part at its relative

importance. His physical frame and intellectual gifts are seen to be subsidiary to the interests of his spiritual nature. *Mens sana in corpore sano*, certainly. But the healthiest body with an ill-trained mind is an abortion. The most brilliant intellectual gifts, poetic, artistic, philosophic, scientific, with an undeveloped, unfostered spirit, with sense for God and for communion with Him neglected, is a torso. The ideal Christian puts his spiritual nature first, his moral interests next,—indeed he makes little division between them, for he remembers Christ's dictum as to the first and second commandments: 'This is the first . . . and the second is like,'—only after these comes his intellectual side, and last of all his body. If sacrifices have to be made, the lower must give place to the higher. If eye, hand, or foot offend, they must go in the interests of entering into life. More than that, he has the strength of a man in whom there is this poise, this balance of parts. He knows his own mind, without any self-sufficiency, self-assertion, or agressiveness. With a humility in which there is no cringing, he realises his own God-given dignity and rights as a man. He understands

Peter's words to Cornelius, 'Stand up; I also am a man'; nay, God's words to Joshua, 'Get thee up; wherefore liest thou upon thy face?' He is man once more as Haydn sang of him in his 'Creation.'

> 'In native worth and honour clad,
> With beauty, courage, strength adorned,
> Erect, with front serene, he stands,
> A man. . . .
> And in his eyes with brightness shines
> The soul, the breath and image of his God.'

(*d*) Still further, the ideal Christian belongs to no particular sphere or condition of life. He is independent of nation or station. He is limited to no particular lot or occupation. Even gender makes no difference. In Christ there is no male or female. They are all one in Christ Jesus. Christianity knows nothing of either the Horatian contempt of the vulgar throng, or the spiritual pride of the Pharisee as he scorns the people that know not the law. It glories in the thought that the Son of God lived on earth as a working man. Not as if He thus conferred some special dignity on the carpenters, but just as His life in a despised town of a despised district tells us that the Christian in his perfection may be found among

the nations furthest down in the scale of the world's civilisation, so also he is not necessarily a genius, an artist, a philosopher, a theologian, or even what the French call, a religieux, but may just as well be a man of science, a commercial man, a mechanic, or a day labourer. He is simply a man, sensitive to the claims of his fellow-men, very strict in scrutinising any claims of his own, above all responsive to the claims of God. He accepts the sphere in which he finds himself, be it what it may, if only it be honest, as a calling from God ; therein he abides with God and lives the Christian life there.

(*e*) Closely akin to this is another feature. The ideal Christian life is lived in the world, not withdrawn from it. Keble is right:

> 'We need not bid for cloistered cell
> Our neighbour or the world farewell.'

We can understand the instinct which impelled men, appalled with a sense of the magnitude and power of the evil in the dying pagan world, and overwhelmed with a sense of their own impotence and liability to temptation and fall, to flee for safety to the desert and to the hermit's cell. But that was never Christ's

intention. 'I pray not that Thou take them out of the world, but that Thou keep them from the evil.' The Christian was always intended by his Lord to be an influence, a ferment, in the circle where his lot is cast. By life and character, habit and disposition, words and ways, he is to tell on his fellows and spread the gospel. How can that be, if he isolates himself or mixes only with men like-minded with himself? No, if the Christian is to be like his Master, he must remember that He was found at the marriage feast and among publicans and sinners, eating and talking with them, that Paul's opportunities were found in the market-place and among the hand-loom weavers at their trade, as well as in the synagogue on the Sabbath. The Christian life is nothing if it is not practical. The Christian is sure to be found, like his Master, in the haunts of men, about his Father's business, and his only peculiarity is that he is continually to be doing good.

(*f*) And yet while in the world, interested in its affairs, sharing in its enterprises, bearing a part in its burdens of civic and political and international responsibility, seeking to shape

everything in harmony with Christ's great ends, the Christian is still to be a man like his Master, 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.' There will be a certain detachment, a certain aloofness, about him. He will not allow himself to become so absorbed in things, that the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, or the lust of other things will choke the Word. He will not allow himself to be swept into an easy compliance with the ways of the world, or think that business demands or customs are sufficient to condone compromise with what God forbids. Here his simplicity asserts itself, but it is the simplicity of light, not of ignorance. He is a man with a conscience. Conciliatory to a degree, ready for concessions wherever principle is not involved, and too loyal to truth to erect mere prejudice into principle, he can yet hold no parley, come to no terms, with sin. He remembers that he must keep himself right with God. Others may find no difficulty where he does. His line of conduct, he may be told, will make no difference to other people. That may be so, will be his answer, but it makes all the difference in the world to me, to my peace of

conscience and my comfort in fellowship with God.

(*g*) This takes us to the very core of the ideal Christian's life, its crowning feature. It is a life in abiding fellowship with God. It has a background which is sacred, which is private. Frank, friendly, sincere, with nothing unworthy to conceal, the Christian will unconsciously suggest to men whom he meets a secret chamber, a retreat where he sees the deep things of God, and from which he draws the strange strength and calm that he bears with him amid the stress and strain of life. The Christian ideal of life is spiritual. It is nourished on spiritual supplies. These are found and appropriated from the pages of the Bible and in the hour of prayer. It is when meditating upon Christ, contemplating the glories of divine grace revealed in Him, and enjoying communion with God in view of them, that the divine life pours in and the soul of man gets the uplift that puts and keeps time and eternity, earth and heaven, in their proper relation for him. A God afar off may beget reverence and awe. But his God in Christ, with whom a man is in daily communion, opening his heart to Him,

confiding his concerns to Him, listening for His voice, is a God whose constant presence engenders a purity of heart, an elevation of spirit, and a sense of the sacredness of everything, that simply transforms the world. That is the ideal of Christian men and women. To them life is a sacred trust, to be kept intact for God, to be used in the spirit of the love of Christ, and to be fostered by fellowship in the Spirit. It is to be devoted once and for all to the service of Christ amid the ranks of all He deigned to call His brethren. It is to be characterised by the strange combination of geniality, aloofness, and unconsciousness that charms by its unstudied grace. But it is, and it remains, an ideal, eternally attractive, but never attained, the more alluring the more it baffles pursuit, only revealing an ever loftier perfection the higher its aspirant scales. But will it be for ever inaccessible? No; for we dare to pray with Paul that we may one day be filled with all the fullness of God.

THE
SOCIAL IDEAL IN CHRISTIANITY
THE KINGDOM OF GOD

'The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.'—LUKE x. 9.

CHAPTER XV

THE SOCIAL IDEAL IN CHRISTIANITY— THE KINGDOM OF GOD

THERE is a great temptation to men to ignore their own nature, to forget how they were created. If they recall the story in the book of Genesis of man's creation, it will come back to them that, despite grammar, man is as much plural as singular. 'How did God create man? . . . Male and female created He them.' When Adam was created, man's creation was only begun, and it was not complete till Eve also was called into being, and Cain and Abel appeared on the scene. From the very first man was intended for a social existence. It is not good for him to be alone. He was created to be one of a family, one of a state. It is a sort of wail of impotence that is heard in the saying, 'God made the country;

man made the town.' If the instinctive tendency of men to dwell together means anything, it tells us that man was always so constituted that towns were inevitable. Man was never intended to dwell in isolation. The finest features in human nature only appear when man is in touch with his fellows. And if the town is often a despair, it is so only because man has failed to understand himself, or to realise what this social side of him involves.

If what was said in previous chapters is recalled, it will be seen that there is no ideal Christian life which is not essentially social. The ideal individual Christian is for one thing a man who is alive to his social responsibilities, who is as deeply convinced of the importance and duty of seeing to the salvation of the soul of his brother as of seeing to the saving of his own soul. If nothing else were available to prove that that is the Christian attitude, this would be enough, namely, the supreme emphasis laid on love. With self so severely repressed, self-love so carefully scrutinised and guarded, what room is there for the worthy play of love in man's heart at all, if man the individual is self-sufficient? The world of

inanimate nature, the lower animals, may stir our emotions, evoke affections which we call love. But what love really means, what it means as it exists in the very nature of the Three-One God, what it should mean in the heart of man towards God, men would have nothing to explain to them, had not God set the solitary in families, and designed society for man and man for society. Christianity, therefore, would be seriously defective if it had no social ideal, as well as its ideal for the individual. As a matter of fact, emphasis is laid on the social element in human life in two distinct ways by Christianity, in a narrower way and in a broader way, in a way that regards its own adherents and in a way that reaches out to those beyond and without its pale. In the gamut of added graces, as Peter reaches the top of the scale, he comes to brotherly kindness, but he does not stop there. He looks to those who decline to be called brothers, and yet he regards them with a kindly eye, and to brotherly kindness adds charity, love to all.

1. In line with this it will be well to notice, first of all, the place of the social ideal in the

narrower sphere, in the relation of Christians to one another.

For this side of things there is one word, the Church. I do not stop to discuss the light that is cast on our Saviour's conception of what we call the Church—which just means 'the Lord's own' (*κυριακή*)—and what He called קהל or *ἐκκλησία*, by the very word which He uses to describe it.[1] It is enough to say that it means the community which gathers, in response to Christ's summons, to form the new Covenant people with God, which takes the place of the old community frequently spoken of as 'the synagogue,' and to which should be transferred all the stability and privileges of Israel. Our Lord's words to Peter, 'on this rock will I build My Church,' show that He always had in view the setting up of a spiritual community, always had in view the formation of a closely knit company of men and women whom either directly or through His messengers He should win to trustful and loving union with Himself.

The purpose of the existence of this com-

[1] See the author's Kerr Lectures, *The Relation of the Apostolic Teaching to the Teaching of Christ*, p. 187.

munity, the Church, is twofold,—worship and propaganda. It exists to foster the life of the believers and to spread the knowledge of the life and truth which is the secret of its own existence. Our Saviour was too well aware of the social instincts of men, which lead them to combine for the accomplishment of common ends, to neglect the mighty force for the advancement of His cause, which was to be found in a strong, compact brotherhood. Still more, the whole spirit of the relationship into which He entered with mankind and into which He came to bring them through Himself with God, so far from being individual, is uniformly social. The man is to be more than a single saint; he is to be a member of a holy family, a citizen of a holy city. If the one distinctive rite of the Christian community, baptism, is pronouncedly individual, reminding men that the way into the fellowship of God is one by one, each man born again by the work of the Spirit in the individual soul, still even there the medium of the Spirit's activity is normally through one already in union with Christ: He reaches one soul through another. The other rite is an ordinary social meal

consecrated to spiritual ends, a meeting of brethren at their Father's table. Heaven itself, the ideal of realised bliss for all who love the Lord, is social, the general assembly and Church of the first-born, living in united enjoyment of the presence and service of God.

No stress is laid on the form of the society. Nothing is more remarkable than the absence of details as to the organisation of the Christian community from the teaching of Christ and His immediate followers. It has been left by our Lord in His wisdom to the consecrated common-sense of His people, guided by the Spirit and the needs of the hour, to adopt that organisation which will best serve the situation. It is infatuation that insists on any one form, be it episcopacy, presbytery, or congregationalism, as if that were a *sine qua non*. Each meets and has met the needs of a particular phase of things; but none is essential to the community. Like everything Christian, the Church, which is Christ's body, is constituted and controlled simply by the presence of His free Spirit. The links which bind it are chains of mutual love and trust and helpfulness and sympathy. Consider Christ's

solicitude to eradicate the spirit of rivalry and engender the spirit of brotherliness amongst His followers. Consider the insistence with which the Epistles call believers to the keeping of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, the avoidance of schism, the practice of love of the brethren. Recall Paul's great parable of the body and the members. It all tells its own tale that the Christian life is not properly understood, till men see that union with Christ involves a vital bond with all who name His name more intimate than birth, blood, or marriage tie. 'Who is My mother? And who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand towards His disciples and said, Behold My mother and My brethren!'

In view of all this, surely Harnack[1] is right in insisting that if ever the Christian Church is to fulfil its mission and engender the proper social spirit throughout humanity, it must begin by setting its own house in order. And is it not significant that the great awakening and trend of the separate sections of the Church towards re-union should have arisen simultaneously with the awakening of the

[1] *The Social Gospel*, p. 78.

peoples to the need of a re-casting of the economic and industrial and international relations of men, so as to counteract the disruptive influences which are forcing different classes and peoples into alienation and antagonism towards one another? There is no force on earth better calculated to draw men together than common love towards Him who was not ashamed to call all men brethren. But will men believe the message about Him, if those who profess allegiance to Him stand aloof from one another? No, the call is urgent that within congregations, denominations, the Church as a whole, the followers of Christ should give free and full play to the social instincts which Christianity engenders and fosters. The Church of Christ must exhibit the ideal of mutual goodwill and helpfulness in unmistakable fashion within its own borders, if it is to impress the world. Members of the same congregation must know nothing of the petty sycophancy or pride that cringes to this and looks down on that. They must be sensitive to the claims of each on each, be the need material, temperamental, accidental, or permanent. At the same time they must

look beyond their own bounds, and, to adopt but transpose the terms of the question put to ministers and elders when they are admitted to office, a question which might equally well be put to every member, they must while 'seeking the purity, edification, peace, and extension of their own church, cherish a spirit of brotherhood towards all the faithful followers of Christ.' Says Paul, says John, says Christ, 'Love one another.' And what is true of congregations is true of the larger wholes.

2. There is, however, a much larger social ideal within the purview of Christianity than the Church, and that is the Kingdom of God.

It is impossible here to discuss fully the relation of the Church to the Kingdom of God. In many ways they seem to be identical, or at any rate to possess common features and members. But the following explanatory statements will indicate the far-reaching difference. The Church itself is distinguishable into the Church Visible and the Church Invisible. The Church Visible consists of all those who openly associate themselves together as the followers of Christ in any of the branches of His community, and it is known to men. The Church Invisible

consists of all those whose public profession is genuine, those who on earth are known to God as true to Him though they have never associated themselves with any section of Christ's professed followers, and those who in a true faith in Christ have passed from this world to be for ever with the Lord. This Church Invisible is known only to God. The Kingdom is an ideal. It is realised wherever and to whatever extent God's will is done on earth as it is done in heaven. As for the relation of the Church to the Kingdom, it might be put in this way. The Church is the association of the citizens of the Kingdom for the establishment of the Kingdom in the world, for the world-wide realisation of the ideal which it implies. The Church in this relation is a propaganda, a fighting force: and the Kingdom is what it fights for.

In some ways the Kingdom might be compared to what are called Utopias. Plato has presented his ideal state in his *Republic.* Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* is a specimen of many others; and in his own sarcastic way, Swift, in *Gulliver's Travels,* describes Utopias in order to expose the scandals of human society. We

have modern Utopias in *Looking Backwards* and similar imaginative sketches of Socialism as it would be in practice. But the Kingdom of God is not a Utopia. It is not a sketch of an ideal human society. It is not a theory or a scheme worked out in details. It is simply the name for what would be the resultant condition of mankind if men would give effect in their lives to certain great guiding principles, the holy laws of God, in their relations among themselves.

Attempts have not been wanting to reproduce the Kingdom of God upon earth and to set it in its proper relation to the Church of God. That was what underlay the great institution which existed during a period of a thousand years, from Charlemagne to the beginning of the nineteenth century, but whose significance has been almost entirely forgotten, it has passed so utterly out of existence—the Holy Roman Empire. Calvin in Geneva, and under his impulse the Puritans in England, when they got their chance in the days of the Commonwealth under Cromwell, had the same grand project before their minds—to bring in the Kingdom of God, to secure that

His law should be the law of the land, and men should be compelled to live in accordance with its gracious behests as those in power understood them. Banish from your minds the idea that a Calvin, a Knox, a Cromwell, was a grasping tyrant like Napoleon, eager to serve his own ends and enforce his will on his fellow-men. These men were only anxious for the imposition of God's will because they believed God's will was the best for the common weal. Indeed, the whole modern problem of the relation of Church and State, when you have separated it from sordid monetary questions of tithes and teinds and formalities and State functions, is in its depths a groping after some effective method for realising in human society the grand ideals called up to the mind by the thought of a kingdom where the will of the holy and gracious God is supreme and is obeyed.

For all that, however, there is a good deal of truth in Mark Twain's appeal. He says, 'The present Christianity makes an excellent private Christian, but its endeavours to make an excellent public one go for nothing substantially. . . . He has sound and sturdy private morals,

but he has no public ones. . . . Who can persuade the nation and Congress to throw away their present public morals and use none but their private ones henceforth in all their activities, both public and private? . . . There is the field, a grand one, a splendid one, a sublime one, and absolutely unoccupied.'[1] That puts its finger on the very spot, the need for the introduction of that spirit, the Christian spirit which reigns in domestic affairs, into business and politics, the re-enthronement not only of love but of justice as the ruling principles in the prosecution of industry and commerce and in the regulation of national and international affairs. What is wanted is not what may be called a Christian anarchism, such as Tolstoi seems to contemplate, where the laws of God having supervened and been accepted in the individual's heart there is no need for any other. That is to ignore the social organism. But the ideal is to infuse the Spirit of Christ into the links and laws that must bind men together. It is not the setting up of any one form of government or system of employment or method of commerce as

[1] *Christian Science*, p. 361.

alone ideal. Christianity is not committed to any one of these. Christianity meets them all with the demand that they pursue their way along the line of fairness of dealing, generosity of judgment, unselfishness and mutual helpfulness. Its ideal is spiritual; it emphasises the spirit in which men are to act under any conditions. But if conditions are found to be fatal to the prevalence of the spirit which Christ approves, incompatible with the true welfare of men, that is their condemnation; they must be changed, cost what it may. As it is admirably put in the Church Life and Work Report of the United Free Church, which deals with this very matter, 'Where ethical principles and economic tendencies seem to diverge, the latter should'—I would say 'must'—'be made to harmonise with the former.'[1] As for international relations, it should be impossible, for instance, for a Christian man to allow himself habitually to think of men of any other nation than his own in a hostile or suspicious spirit.

Far truer to the spirit of Christ was the attitude of two women I passed one day

[1] *Reports*, May 1909, xviii. 13.

lately. They were of the humblest class, made their living by picking up odds and ends from dust-bins in the streets of Edinburgh. Each was carrying a heavy load, when another woman passed with a heavy bundle balanced on her head. 'She's a nice woman that,' said the one to the other, and the remark met with ready assent. I was anxious to get a better look at this woman who had won this approval, and hastened to overtake her. What a delightful surprise it was to find that the woman commended by these two simple folks was a buxom, hard-working Italian! Here was a triumph over racial prejudice! Brotherhood of the nations is what Christ has taught His people to set before them as their ideal, a kingdom where national interests will be subordinated to those which are world-wide, and affect the welfare of all mankind. Peace on earth and goodwill toward men were notes in the Angels' song. How then should it be possible for a prominent labour leader, himself a Christian,—Mr. Arthur Henderson, M.P.,—regretfully to suggest that Christ's institution for the realisation of His aims may fail to serve the interests

of the Kingdom of God here, and that the Trades Unions may have to lead the crusade of peace? If that be true, shame on the Church of Christ!

It may be worth while to note some of the characteristic convictions which will animate a man, and which he will seek to make operative, who has caught a glimpse of the Christian ideal of society in the Kingdom of God.

(*a*) He will be convinced that rights are secondary; duties are primary; and rights rest on duties. For what are rights? Rights are opportunities to obey the dictates of duty. I am born with needs, for the satisfaction of which during many a year I am dependent on the loving care of others, society's instant notification to me of my debt to her. As soon as opening intelligence and growing strength permit, society claims repayment of the debt, reminds me of my duty; and the only right I can claim is the right of opportunity to fulfil the calling of my nature and play my part, do my duty, repay my debt. Froude puts it in this way: 'Popular forms are only possible when individual men can govern their own lives on moral principles and when duty is of

more importance than pleasure, and justice than material expediency.'[1] These words state what will be the features that will take precedence—moral principle, duty, justice; but they also imply the need for a particular atmosphere and discipline of the individual spirit, if an ideal society is to exist. It is only in a society where these prevail that the Kingdom of God will really begin to appear.

(*b*) Again, there will be the conviction that spiritual and not material interests are supreme. In most of the criticism of the supposed inertness of the Church in reference to things social there is one prevailing complaint, which is only to the Church's credit. That is, that it will not subordinate the spiritual to the material. It will not grow enthusiastic over schemes that only aim at material betterment. It will not admit that the battle is won, or even that the tide is turned, when physical or even intellectual conditions are substantially improved. It holds that these are subsidiary and the redemption of society is still to strive for. There will be more to say on this in the next

[1] Cf. Mazzini, *Essays*, 'The Writings of Thomas Carlyle,' p. 117.

chapter. Meantime it is enough to say that here the Church is true to its Master. He had no mercy on those who exploited their fellows. His followers had no tolerance for, declined to admit the Christianity of, those who were content to leave the poor, the miserable, the vicious in their degrading surroundings, did nothing either to rescue men from them, or abolish them altogether. But the conviction remains that earthly well-being is a poor substitute for the emancipation of the spirit and the capacity recovered for fellowship with God.

(*c*) Still more, the glimpse of the Kingdom of God brings home the conviction that my neighbour's interests are as sacred as my own. Indeed there are words of Christ which have only to be followed out to their legitimate issues which state this and which involve the emergence of a society Christianised: 'Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you'; 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' "And who is my neighbour?" Read Christ's parable in answer to that question and you will be left inquiring, "Who is not?" It brings all humanity within its sweep. If it is asked why this idea

that has borne fruit abundantly in private beneficence and in the inauguration of societies for relief of needs manifold and diverse has failed to dominate the wider sphere, it is because of the incapacity of the human mind to pass beyond the concrete case, the common failure of the ordinary imagination to grasp the wider issues, to make the progress that is needed, and which consists in passing not only 'from rights to duties, from interest to functions,' but above all 'from egotism and private interests'—in the sense of those which only appeal directly to oneself—'to thinking about the common good.'[1] It is often easy, however, for men to impose on themselves, and to think that society has made this advance when in reality its interest in, say, education, sanitation, criminal reform, is only dictated by a narrow selfishness that leads each individual to give his support to the introduction of new precautions which he thinks will better safeguard himself. It is so difficult to suppress self-interest; or rather it is so difficult to raise interest in others to the same plane as interest in oneself. The Budget discussion and Tariff Reform are the

[1] Cairns, *Christianity in the Modern World*, p. 277.

best present-day proofs of this. But until private interest stands simply on the level of public interest, or below it, the coming of the Kingdom of God is still to seek.

(*d*) The crowning conviction is that ultimately the reconstitution of society can only come about by the influence of religion. That was the result to which after patient study of the course of history Mr. Benjamin Kidd came, and which he wrote his two great books to prove. It is a truth which has been pithily expressed in the phrase: 'Society rests not upon science, but upon conscience.' That is to say, it is not more knowledge of the conditions of life that is needed, a more systematic and complete study of biology and anthropology and hygiene and political economy and sociology. It is a quickening of the moral sensibility and responsibility in the individual and in the common thought of the community. What has just been said about the selfishness lurking behind much that calls itself social reform bears this out. It is not enough to open men's eyes to dangers that assail themselves; they must be made to feel that the evil is just as serious if it only threatens their brethren,

and that they are responsible if in the presence of such danger they remain supine. But what is to startle the inert conscience on whose activity the interests of society depend? Listen to Dr. Martineau: 'There is a certain morbid and confused Christian humility which is not content with deploring its failure in humane and charitable zeal, but speaks of it as a wrong done to others, as a withholding of a debt due to the neglected and depraved . . . This language is not true .... To reform the thief and so on is a duty, not, however, to them, . . . but to God and to His moral order of the world. The total loss of this idea from the humanistic school of writers in the present day is the great drawback on the purity of their influence.'[1] That may require some modification. It is too sweeping in its exclusion of duty to the men who are down. But it is absolutely right in its emphasis on the supreme obligation to God, and the fatal result of ignoring it. The constraining influence which will ultimately arouse sleeping consciences and bring in the Kingdom of God is nothing but the sense of responsibility to God. A revived and

[1] *Types of Ethical Theory*, ii. 125.

enlarged spirit of religion is the prime requisite for the regeneration of society in our day. Nothing is more eloquent of this than the history of the Salvation Army. Begun as a purely individualistic agency, aiming at the salvation of individual souls, it was constrained by experience to enlarge its efforts and attack the social problems. The risk to the Army and to others is that they forget the meaning of their own history. What the whole Church of Christ needs to learn and lay to heart is on the one hand that it has not fulfilled its mission till it has sought to impress the stamp of Christ's spirit upon society, upon its habits and opinions and ways of trade and politics. It must compel its adherents to carry their principles——practising them and commending them to others—into the halls of industry, the counting-house, the polling-booth, the Privy Council. But on the other hand, if that spirit is to be preserved and maintained, the Church of Christ must never forget that it comes from God, and His people must always draw upon Him for it. It must never forget the lesson of Nathaniel Hawthorne's tale *The World's Holocaust.* Into one great conflagration everything was cast

that was supposed in any way to have worked mischief and discord among men. But the devil, who had watched at first in dismay, as if his handiwork was ruined, turned away when all was cast in with a leer of satisfaction as he saw possibilities of the return of all the evils, for he said to himself, 'They have forgotten to throw in one thing—the human heart.' There will never be a regenerate society while men have unregenerate hearts. There will never be an ideal Kingdom without ideal men. And the renewal of the hearts of men abides with God. 'Except a man be born again—born from above—he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.'

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIALISM

'I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.'—REV. xxi. 2.

CHAPTER XVI

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIALISM

MAZZINI, the clarion voice that roused the spirit of Italy to its political redemption, in one of his essays refers, and refers with approval, to an old law of Solon, the Greek legislator. It was to this effect, that those who in an insurrection abstained from taking part on one side or the other should be degraded. It is like the law that recently came into force in the Austro-Hungarian Empire by which penalties are inflicted on the man who does not vote in a parliamentary election. These are wise laws. They are aimed at those who look on with indifference when matters are in progress that involve the wellbeing of the whole community. These are times when no man has a right to be neutral, when it is criminal to stand aloof and have no opinion. The man who does so in effect lays himself open to

God's reproof addressed to Cain when he insolently asked 'Am I my brother's keeper?' God's answer to that is, Yes, and woe betide you, if you fail in your care.

Now, in our day there is nothing that presses more urgently for consideration than the social conditions under which we live. Recall Belfast of two years ago. There was an eruption of the crater over which we live. What took place there might take place anywhere. Of course, many factors have to be taken into account which explain the outburst there. But the elements that caused the discontent which there boiled over are to be found all over our land and other lands. The amassing of enormous wealth and power in the hands of a few who practically hold the life of the rest in their power; the poverty, misery, and degradation at the other end of the scale; the senseless extravagance and the utter disregard of the wellbeing of the 'have-nots' by the 'haves'—as they have been called—so long as they secure their own wishes; the inability of so many of the 'have-nots' to think of any other ideal of life than indolence and drunkenness; all that presents a situation which demands the

attention of every thoughtful man, and which should make every man who is not thoughtful stop and think. It is this situation that has called what we name Socialism into existence. It sees in all this the condemnation of the prevailing principles of industry and economics; and it calls for their complete revision. Socialism is first a great criticism, scathing and drastic, of the principle of *laisser faire* and private capital; and second, it is a theory of how things should be re-arranged. And whether we agree with its theory of readjustment or not, every Christian man must give sympathetic ear to its burning words of protest against the glaring abuses of our time.

But here a question arises, why are Socialists in so many cases so violently anti-Christian? Or if that is putting it too strongly—although it would be easy to quote utterances of some of them that would quite justify it—why are they so impatient of Christians and the Church? It is for a reason which is quite intelligible. They think the Church is supine where it should be concerned and active. They think that it is in league with the wealthy against the poor. They treat it as

if it were committed to the individualist and the capitalist. And they hurl at it such taunting questions as this—and from the terms of them it is apparent why I ask rather, why are they opposed to the Church, than, why are they anti-Christian: many of them respect Christ as the Carpenter, the Friend of the poor and oppressed, and they address the Church thus; 'This is a Christian country. What would Christ think of Park Lane (the home in London of aristocratic land-owners and speculators in African mines) and the slums and hooliganism? What would He think of the Stock Exchange, and the music-hall, and the racecourse? What would He think of our national ideals? What would He think of the House of Peers and the Yellow Press? . . . Ladies and gentlemen, you are Christian in name, but I discern little of Christ in your ideals, your institutions, and your daily lives. You are a mercenary, self-indulgent, frivolous, boastful, blood-guilty mob of heathen. . . . My Christian friends, I am a Socialist, and as such believe in, and work for, universal freedom and universal brotherhood and universal peace . . . and you call

me "an infidel."'[1] And if we really are thus supine and indifferent, we are false to Christ, and deserve the scorn.

But are we? Or must we become Socialists if we would remain true to our Christianity? Or is it impossible for a Christian to be a Socialist? Let us clear up things somewhat.

1. First of all, even Socialists who are quite friendly to Christianity, so far as it goes, complain that it is incomplete; they admit that it is excellent as a rule of life for the individual; but it gives no guidance for man in his larger social relations, as a member of the state with public duties, as a member of the industrial world amid all that is implied in the clash of life by such words as competition, co-operation, capital, labour. Christ, it is claimed, discovered the individual, and that is admitted; but it is added, there His service to mankind ends. Christianity is only concerned about the individual, takes no thought for the progress and development of society, of man as a social being.

Superficially that may seem true, but only superficially. It is the glory of Christ that

[1] Blatchford, *God and my Neighbour*, x.

He discovered the individual. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. And one of the things that was lost was the sense of the infinite value of a single human soul. After the lecture in the dissecting-room in the Glasgow University one day a student, usually all vivacity and chatter, was observed by his friend to be very silent. Asked why, he said, 'A curious thing happened in the laboratory to-day. Pointing to the body on which we were working, the professor suddenly said, "Gentlemen, that was once tenanted by an immortal soul."' The young man had never had a thought like this about the bodies he was dissecting before. So Christ startled the world. He came into its dissecting-rooms and operating theatres, its laboratories of industry, its barracks and camps, where men were holding life cheap and exploiting thousands for the sake of gain or fame for the few, and He said, 'Gentlemen, every man and woman, ay, and little child, on earth, is an immortal soul and of infinite value to God the heavenly Father. Whosoever shall offend, *i.e.* do an injury to, one of these little ones, little in years, or little in intelligence, or little in popular esteem, it

were good for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.' That was Christ's discovery of the individual to the surprise and astonishment of the world.

But has that been a narrowing, cramping discovery in the history of mankind? Has it isolated men and separated them from interest in their fellows? On the contrary, it has taught them that there are no step-bairns in the family of God. It has taught them that all men are equal, all men children, and therefore all men brethren in the family of God. They have not all equal abilities, but they have all equal rights, and what is even more important, they have all equal duties to each other and to God. As a Christian I have no fault to find with the motto of the French Revolution, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, except the order. Reverse it and you are nearer the logic of things: Fraternity, Equality, Liberty. Brotherhood itself is the product of sonship, sonship to God. It is because Christ has established for men their place in the family of God, children of God, that brotherhood follows. It is because we are brethren

that we must admit a common equality. And it is because we are equal that none has a right to lord it over the others; liberty is the right of all, but a liberty conditioned and regulated by the thought of what is for the wellbeing of all. And it is because through Christ the humblest individual on God's earth has come to his own, has had the rights of his immortal soul vindicated for him, that all the rest follows. Had Christ never revealed the worth of the individual by laying down His life for him, making infinitely much of him, Socialism, which constructively is a plan for securing the enjoyment of their equal rights by all, would never have had ground to stand on. Socialism, if it would only see it, owes its existence to Christ and the ideas He set fermenting in the minds and hearts of men.

2. But more than that; Christianity does not ignore men's social conditions, the rights and duties of corporate life. On the contrary, from His very first appearance Christ's expressly presented ideal was a kingdom, an ordered society, that is to say, in which there would be proper guarantee for the life, safety,

rights, and liberties of all. It is simply to be wilfully blind to whole stretches of Christ's teaching, indeed to leave out the dominant note in the scale, if men say that Christ thought of nothing but the individual. 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God': who said that? It was Jesus Christ; and at the very time when He was exposing the utter fatuity of Mammon worship, indeed gave us the word which Socialism flings with scorn at the capitalist and all his ways—Mammon.

There are, however, two points about the re-constitution of society on which the Christian and the Socialist who is not a Christian are not at one. The one is this; they differ as to where they are to look for it. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, says Christ; and the Socialist sets to look for it in what is a mere addendum: plenty to eat, plenty to drink, plenty to wear Readjust your commercial and industrial methods so as to secure that, he says, and you will have an ideal state; men will then be free from all anxiety and carking care, and be able to develop their minds, their artistic tastes, their religious instincts, and so on. The Christian looks else-

where: 'I John saw the Holy City . . . descending out of heaven from God.' 'Oh yes, just so,' complain the Socialists, 'it is just as we say. You put us off amid the miseries of earth by dangling before us the sugared morsel of a perfect state in a problematic future.' No. Christians may have been too prone to treat the pictures of the future given by Christ and His apostles as if they all lay on the other side of Jordan in the sweet fields of Eden. But, thanks in part to much needed criticism, Christians have come to understand their Master better than they did, and they see what they too long ignored; that He was telling them what was to be, and what they were to work to make way for, here. I John saw the Holy City descending out of heaven. Did it remain hung in mid air, a sort of Laputa? No. It was to be set up on earth, and the nations of the earth find their way into it. Set up this kingdom, says Christ, God's kingdom, where God's law prevails, and men recognise the obligations of their citizenship as all children of God and therefore brethren, and let them behave as such; and earth will turn a paradise. All merely earthly wants will find an easy

supply. 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all these things—food, clothing, healthy homes—will be added unto you.' If it is only these 'additions' on which men set their hearts, they are doomed to disappointment. The want of them, the wrongful deprivation of them, may open our eyes to fundamental mistakes in our present way of doing things. And let there be no mistake, the existence of a submerged tenth and of multitudes more on the verge of submergence is such a sore on the body politic as must bring concern to every Christian heart, and must awake to a grave misgiving as to whether the methods of competition and private capital are not fundamentally wrong. But as in the days of the Commonwealth and in reference to kinds of government 'people awoke,' as John Morley says, 'to the hard truth that to turn a monarchy into a free commonwealth is not enough to turn the purgatory of our social life into a paradise,' no more is the attainment of what Schäffle calls 'the quintessence of Socialism, its alpha and omega, viz., the transformation of private and competing capitals into a united, collective capital'—a mere change in our economic

methods—sufficient to right all wrongs and make us all good, kind, prosperous.

That brings us to the second difference between Christian and non-Christian Socialist. The Christian feels that the evil at the root of things lies deeper than in an economic mistake. The other repeats the mistake which Amiel charges against Victor Hugo in *Les Misérables*. He says, 'The author ignores or pretends to forget the instinct of perversity, the love of evil for its own sake, which is contained in the human heart.' Sin lies at the root of all our troubles, economic and social. If you don't believe that statement, for sin say selfishness, thoughtlessness, and the love of money, and we will agree—only I call that sin. And it was the perception of this that led the Saviour to proclaim the coming of the new kingdom in the way He did, to preface it with a call to repentance. 'Repent,' He said, 'for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' And for the secret of prosperity men need to ponder John's prayer for Gaius that 'he may prosper in all things . . . as his soul prospers.' Worldly prosperity without soul prosperity is the secret of social wrong. If all

Socialists would see that, they would understand the attitude of Christians; they would get new light on what is the true cure for capitalists and an untractable proletariat.

3. Let me state a third point. Christ has given us the great law which is the essential element for the redemption of society and the cure of its wrongs.

Why are not all Christians who sympathise completely with the Socialist in his criticism of present methods of trade and the results of social cleavage which companies, trusts, combines, trades unions, co-operative stores—the products of this system—produce; why are they not all Socialists? That is to say, why do they not all work for the adoption of the socialist programme and the collectivist method of trade? It is because they are not convinced that this particular method will secure the desired results. They see clearly what I have just stated, that the evil lies deeper than the methods of commerce and trade, and that that evil unchecked will find little difficulty in ruining the best organised socialistic regime. The Christian does not feel that Christianity is thirled to any one economic system, any

more than it is to any one system of government. The Christian believes that if men would simply carry out the great law of Christ under any system wrongs would cease and every man would dwell in peace and comfort. What is the law? 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Apply that steadily, and paupers would be impossible, and millionaires as impossible as paupers.

There is an old word for the community, the body politic, which is seldom used—though they have returned to it in Australia—but which has the inspiration of that law of Christ about it, and which it would be good to recover. It is the word, 'Commonwealth.' I like it. Commonwealth! There's a grand ring of brotherliness and comfort and prosperity about it. It was one of Cromwell's words. And every Christian who loves his land will agree with Cromwell's appeal to the state, 'be pleased to reform the abuses of all professions, (*i.e.* including trades, commercial methods, etc.); for if there be any one that makes many poor to make a few rich, that suits not a commonwealth.' Professor Cairns in his inspiring book *Christianity in the Modern World*

says, 'The crying need of our age in the industrial sphere is the deepening and diffusion of the sense of the common good.' Yes, that is needed in the industrial sphere, not only among employers who must think of the good of their men and of their customers, but also among the tradesmen who must think of more than their own trade interests, namely, of fellow workmen who are not tradesmen or not in their union or not in their trade, and of masters and buyers as well. Commonwealth, a state of society where men think not of private weal and private wealth, but of common weal and common wealth; that tastes of loyalty to Christ's law, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'

We may not endorse the economic and industrial methods of Socialism. We may not see how they possibly could work, and may lack the faith to try them. But Socialism should not be treated either as a bogey or a menace. Its ideal is to be admired. It sets before itself the removal of the abuses that are the blight upon our country. How much of the spirit of Christ there is in it! Let us keep it alive to the debt it owes to Christ, and

hail it as an ally, not denounce it as an enemy. And if we still must refuse to commit ourselves to all its schemes, may it no longer have any cause to reproach the Christian for any apparent supineness as to the wellbeing of the outcast, the downtrodden, and the needy, who were so dear to the heart of our Saviour.

WORSHIP IN CHRISTIANITY

'God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.'—JOHN iv. 24.

CHAPTER XVII

WORSHIP IN CHRISTIANITY

WORSHIP has in the present day fallen somewhat into the background. It is neglected by many who otherwise seem good Christians. The neglect has generally begun in the secret chamber, and spread to the family altar and the sanctuary. Men have lost the sense of the nature or the possibilities of it. We live in a utilitarian age, and faith is not always ready with an answer that will satisfy the world's *cui bono*. Men who cultivate the hours of devotion themselves feel at times as if an ideal state might be reached, in which there would be no place for special seasons of worship; worship, as it is generally understood, would be superseded by a constantly pervasive spirit of communion with God. Scripture, indeed, seems almost to point to this. John, when he saw in vision the Holy City, the New Jeru-

salem, saw no temple therein; though here it is well to notice why. Not because worship had ceased, but because it had become universal and continual; 'the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof.'

Of course, one reason for the dying down of zeal for worship is not far to seek. It is due to the excessive importance which has too often been attached to the observance of the mere forms and times of worship, and to the inordinate concern about what those forms ought to be. When the matters of chief anxiety as to worship have come to be the cut and colour of millinery, in which those engaging in it are clad, the form of the phrases used, the posture and tones in which they are uttered, serious and truly devout minds lose taste for the whole thing, and Froude's contemptuous remark is fully justified: 'One might as well be interested in the amours of the heathen gods.'

In view of all this it may be well to make the necessary admissions with reference to worship, and then return to see what is its permanent and proper place in the life of the Christian.

Let it be granted, then, that all honest work

done for the love of God and the good of our neighbours is worship. Let it be granted that men should make every day a Lord's day—a very different thing, be it remarked, however, from making the Lord's Day an every day. Let it be granted that 'he prayeth best who loveth best all things both great and small.' Let it be granted that worship must be postponed to fair dealing with our fellow men—'If thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, first go and be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift.' Let it be granted that the practice of common human kindness outweighs all rites and ceremonies—'pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction and to keep oneself unspotted from the world,' the second part being as important as the first. 'Let it be granted,' as Goethe says in his account of the Third or Highest Religion in *Wilhelm Meister*, 'that to take the mysterious secrets in which the divine depth of sorrow lies hid—namely the torturing Cross and Him who suffered on it—and play with them, fondle them, trick them out in

shows and performances, ends in making the most reverend of all solemnities vulgar and paltry.' Let it be granted, as Lessing says, that 'it is much easier to rave religiously than to do well.'[1] Nay, let it be granted, as Renan bluntly puts it, that 'blasphemy is more pleasing to the Eternal than the hypocritical homage of the sanctimonious,' or in other words, that the worship offered to God by the hypocrite is the rankest blasphemy, and is as odious to Him as the fawning flattery of a sycophant or traitor to a high-spirited monarch. The Book of Job and many a word of our Saviour say so. All that may be, and must be, admitted. But all that does not settle the question as to whether there is a place for worship as such in true Christianity or not. It simply emphasises the fact that worship, if it is to be what it ought to be, must be genuine. It insists that unless worship is genuine, it is no worship at all.

But that is only to state in less happy terms what our Lord put positively and directly in His rubric on worship, which He stated to the Samaritan woman by the side of Jacob's well—

[1] *Nathan the Wise*, i. 2.

'God is a spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.' The whole passage from the point at which the woman introduces the subject of worship is instructive. It makes these points plain, and all on Christ's own authority. (*a*) The place of worship is of no importance, and that covers all the formal accessories. (*b*) Worship to be worth anything must be intelligent. 'We know what we worship.' (*c*) Worship, again, is something which God expects and desires,—'the Father seeketh true worshippers.' (*d*) The very name used of God here, Father, suggests that worship is somehow bound up with the very character of the new relation between man and God, as children and their father, which Christianity has introduced. And (*e*) it is the nature and character of God which determines what is and what is not entitled to be called worship. That is the force of the crowning statement already quoted,—'God is a spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.'

When these deliberate words of the Saviour are set over against all our admissions and are given the weight they ought to have with

every Christian, they leave no doubt as to the part worship ought to play in the Christian life. It is not a matter that may or may not be attended to. It is indispensable to a worthy tenure of a place in God's family. To neglect it is as unnatural as for a child to be careless of its mother's company, or a family to be indifferent to a father's honour. To neglect it is wilfully to forego one of the most helpful means to the fostering of the spiritual life and the propagation of the Christian faith. Whatever may be its ultimate form or fate in the final bliss of the redeemed,—though worship, adoration, seems liker the possible climax of perfected service which God may require in heaven ; the counterpart of the service of the seraphim and cherubim and the four and twenty elders around the throne than any other earthly occupation,—there is no doubt that here for God's glory and our own good worship must retain its place in the esteem and practice of all who claim to be His children.

To mention only one reason for this, the practice of worship is a great and needed safeguard against forgetfulness of what men owe to God. With a quickened conscience of what

we owe to our fellow men, with a heightened sense of the duty to serve them if we really wish to serve Christ, and impelled in the first instance to such service by a new sense of debt to Christ, men may yet be tempted to become so absorbed in their service of their fellows that they forget to Whom they owe the impulse, and for Whose sake they serve them; and they leave their first love. It is a temptation to a sin analogous to, though not so reprehensible as, forgetting the Giver in the gift, or worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator. The result is a materialising of the ideals, contentment with improvement of earthly conditions while souls are left untended. It is in the hours of worship that these influences are counteracted, and men are recalled to the mystical possibilities of life, the sweets of divine fellowship, the supremacy of the spiritual. It is there that men are reminded that 'the Kingdom of God' is not only 'not meat and drink, but' also more than 'righteousness,' namely, 'peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.' We live in the day when the sublime idea, Christ's sublime idea, of the Kingdom of God is coming to its own, when the social aims

of Christianity are getting a fairer share of the recognition they deserve. But if they are to be kept unspotted from the world, worship, the opportunity in public and private for the interplay of souls with the Eternal, the hour of refreshing for the spirit and for breathing unalloyed the air of heaven, the breath of God, must be cherished and prized.

The importance of worship in God's esteem is seen both in the instincts He has implanted in the heart of man and in the instructions and provisions He has made for its practice. Why in hours of extremity or moments of victory do men spontaneously and unitedly gather for prayer or thanksgiving? It is because their hearts are recalled at these moments to what they so often forget, that there is One that is higher than the highest and mightier than the mightiest. Why is the sanctity of the Sabbath enshrined in the ten commandments? Why among the laws given to Israel were there minute instructions about the ritual of worship? Why in Holy Scripture have we a whole book, the Book of Psalms, which in large part simply provides fit expression for reverent souls in which to render public or private homage to

God? What does an institution like the Lord's Supper, a lesson like the Lord's Prayer, an object-lesson like the Saviour's custom of joining with men of Nazareth in the synagogue, visiting Jerusalem at the annual festivals, and withdrawing to the wilderness for prayer alone with His Father, teach us? Surely the cumulative testimony of all this is that God sets store by the worship offered to Him. He is anxious that it should not be crowded out of men's lives by other pressing concerns. He would have men know that when they hear the calling of their own hearts to enter God's presence, though awe and reverence are ready to strike them dumb at the thought of meeting with Him, they may be reassured. For God has given them simple words as those in which to speak to Him, and used a simple evening meal to afford the occasion for highest spiritual communion. These things effectually brush aside the mocking spirit which derisively asks what can God care for our praises, paltry even when rendered in the most majestic harmonies which we can command. They tell us of the close affinity in God's sight between the simple, the solemn, the sacred, and the sincere. They

tell us that God knows that it is good for us to turn away to Him in this spirit in company with others or by ourselves, and that what is good for us is well pleasing to Him.

Worship assumes three forms, public worship, the worship of the home, and private worship. Each of these will serve every purpose that worship can serve, though it is not necessary to demonstrate this point by point. It will be more useful to notice, in the case of each, one service which it is specially fitted to render. It is necessary, however, to enter a caveat against the idea that observance of any one of these forms may be treated as a sufficient substitute for another; the idea that attendance on public worship may be regarded as a sufficient reason for the neglect of the family altar, or hours given to private devotion be pleaded an excuse for abstention from the house of God. To act on such lines will have exactly the same effects in the spiritual life as are found in the experience of the public man who has no home life, or the recluse whose nature is as onesided as his counterpart in the mollusc kingdom, the hermit crab. Worship really brings religion to articulate expression, and as men live in

public, in the family circle, and in the privacy of their own hearts, so worship for the Christian should have its place in each.

Public worship takes two forms. On the one hand there is the service of prayer, praise, reading, study, and proclamation of the word. On the other hand there are the sacraments, significant rites in which the cardinal truths of the faith are symbolised. It is a misfortune when men fall debating as to the relative value of these two forms. Wise men will seek to be equally profited by each; for each is of value to the individual who shares in it. Times of public worship are great times of reminder of common wants and common blessings, common responsibilities and common resources. The uniting with other believers is an enormous help in enabling each follower of Christ to realise the strength and homogeneity of the cause with which he has identified himself in becoming a Christian. It delivers from the paralysing power of the sense of isolation. It makes all the difference in the world even to an Elijah whether he is left thinking 'I, even I only am left' or knows of other 'seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.' When

men are beginning in isolation to lose heart about Christianity, let them attend a great hearty gathering of Christians, and they will find it true,

> 'Hearts are brave again and arms are strong. Hallelujah.'

But the great value of the public worship of God is its declarative function. The observance of it is an impressive testimony on the part of believers to their faith in God, to their knowledge of Him, and to the value they attach to the knowledge of Him. Whether it be in a liturgy with its creed solemnly rehearsed, or in the great confessional hymn that is so magnificent an asset of a Lutheran service, or in the closely reasoned, moving sermon which takes the chief place in the public worship of the Reformed churches, or in the sacred gathering to observe the Lord's Supper when men show forth the Lord's death till He come; in one way or another in public worship those who love their Lord declare their faith in Him, proclaim what they have found in Him, and invite others to join their ranks. It is reassuring and refreshing to themselves. It should prove winning or warning to the curious, the anxious, the indifferent,

the hostile. It is a great opportunity for men to learn what Christianity, the way of salvation in Christ, really is. It is a great time for recalling Christians to what their professed faith demands of them and imposes upon them, and for offering those appeals to heart and conscience that will win the sinner from the error of his ways. When public worship is thought of thus, and in its observance is true to this ideal, it is not difficult to understand why such gatherings should be well pleasing to God, and why He should be anxious that those who profess to honour Him should see that they are worthily attended and heartily conducted with due regard for reverence and truth.

Family worship is another equally significant phase of divine service, the gathering of the household with its head for common devotions. It is a grave misfortune when husband or father fails to be priest in his own house, even as Abraham was in his. To such failure more than to anything else may often be traced a dying down of religion. Or what is equally fatal is the observance of family worship in a perfunctory spirit which reduces it to a form that soon becomes as irksome to a household

as it is futile for spiritual ends. No wonder sons fail to institute it in their own homes, when in a father's house it has become a mere matter of routine.

On the other hand, when wisely and reverently conducted, family worship fulfils a high function. It puts the members of the household on their proper footing with each other. If there are servants in the house, it sanctifies and elevates their relation to the family. It provides the great opportunity for passing on from one generation to another the blessed truths we have learned about our heavenly Father from His Son, in the very atmosphere where it can best be understood — family, father, God, 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ from whom every family on earth has its name.' It will stamp the character of the home, keep the true ideals to the front, prevent the creeping in of worldly ideals. How can a family read together the glowing teaching of the Saviour in the Sermon on the Mount, for instance, or the Epistle of James, and then give themselves up to lives in which the effort to outstrip their neighbours in wealth, in business, in dress and display is the

paramount concern? To let that supervene is to make the observance of worship a travesty and degrade it to a heartless sham. On the other hand, let family worship be sincere, and the outpouring of the father's heart in prayer will be a revelation to his offspring of the secret of his own life. It will make it easier for him, nay, give him the openings, to speak to them directly of their spiritual interests and of the deep things of God. And so, once more, who can doubt that this daily recognition of God's rightful place in the life of the home, so full of significance for the preservation of the knowledge of the truth about God in the heart of the community, and associating it with the tenderest and most intimate relations of life, is most welcome to the great heart of God? It is not in vain that husband and wife, father and child, brother and sister, master and servant, hear God's word together, and kneel side by side at the throne of grace. It is not only the sweetener of home intercourse, the kindliest undesigned critic and corrector of habits of speech and life, but it makes home a Bethel, every hearth a sanctuary.

Then there is private worship, all the secret

communing of the soul with God. This might well merit a chapter to itself to do justice to the importance of personal study of the word of God, searching not only into the meaning of it, but for its message to a man's own soul, and another to demonstrate the privilege and potency of prayer from the lips of even a single righteous man. It would be well worth while to enlarge on the mastery which the practice of it gives a man over himself and others. Men are amazed at the influence which some humble soul exerts, until the secret leaks out and he is known to be an Israel, a prince with God, who wrestles with Him in secret prayer and prevails. It must suffice to refer to what is always involved in any worship that deserves the name, but is perhaps presented more vividly in private worship than elsewhere. True worship is always a meeting of souls with God. It is possible to forget God's presence as the essential, when multitudes meet with one another at the appointed place. They are content to set value by or belittle the worth of public worship by the influence which the preacher's word or personality, or their own meeting with one

another exerts upon them. The thought that God was there has scarcely entered. It may be the same at family prayers, the two or three gathered in Christ's name, but almost oblivious that He is in the midst of them. But when it comes to private worship that can scarcely be. The soul then is alone; but why? To be lost in reverie? To commune with nature? No; but to find that it is not alone. The bowed knee and the closed eye tell of the world shut out and the inward eye opened to the awful yet welcome presence of God. The secrets of the heart laid bare are not simply reviewed by the soul itself but spread out before His eye. Sins are not only remembered but confessed, and there is the cry for pardon. The longings and desires are not simply indulged but, purified and cleansed, are offered as prayers. The joys recalled are not mere sweet memories but themes of gratitude and praise. Everything is seen in the light of God's countenance, and His longsuffering mind and will are humbly, tremblingly, yet joyfully awaited.

This private worship brings the life of men into its true place in God's scheme of things and puts God where He ought to be in

the thought and esteem of each of His intelligent creatures. All worship is defective which fails of this. It misses its very intention if it fails to make men say, 'Surely God is in this place.' But let men meet with God in public worship or in private, at the family altar or in the private room, the holy joy of it, the glad surprise, the satisfied expectancy will find no words adequate but Jacob's own: 'This is none other than the house of God; it is the gate of heaven.'

CHRISTIANITY—ITS PLACE IN HISTORY

'These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.'—Acts xvii. 6.

CHAPTER XVIII

CHRISTIANITY—ITS PLACE IN HISTORY

WHEN properly handled the history of Christianity is a fascinating subject. How could it be otherwise? It is the story of God at work in the life of mankind. Even if it be looked at in a strictly self-contained way, this is true. It is the story of a marvellous growth that has assumed a rich variety of forms, and has produced a crop of goodly fruits. There has been steady intensive progress in the understanding of itself. The ideas which Christ sowed as seed in the minds of men, the ideals He set before them as those for which they should strive, the thoughts He engendered as to Himself, the possibilities of life and the ways by which they might be attained which He hinted at for those who would hear Him, were all so rich that, hearty as was the response they immediately called out, attempts in the line of

them only revealed how much more lay beyond. And the result has been an age-long unfolding to itself of what Christianity really means.

Its course has often been marked by bitter divergence of thought as to where the truth really lay. Men asserted and refuted, from words came even to blows—a way as unchristian as it is absurd of attempting to settle anything except where the superior physical force lies. But though on calm review the spectacle often seems strangely incongruous, though the feeling often left is that both contestants were right and both were wrong, mainly right in their affirmations, wrong in their denials, about the Person of Christ, say, or justification by faith, or the doctrine of the Atonement, still criticism is not the whole duty towards the matter. It calls for respectful regard as the indication of the sense in those called Christians of the importance of the truth and life committed to them, and of their duty to maintain it in its integrity. And this impression grows, as out of the strife and conflict there emerges a truer conception of the meanings of things than at first was grasped or enjoyed, and as the result of reflection, experiment, discussion, men rea-

lise better what has come to them and what they have in Christ.

There are even more startling features in the course of the history of Christianity. There are the staggering periods of degeneracy. There are stretches of its history in which, particularly in the person of its would-be leaders, it is almost impossible to recognise, in what is called Christianity, any connection with Christ or His Spirit. One can regard with respect, if yet with pain, the misguided passion in debate of men in earnest about truth and whose lives otherwise are set to lofty standards, say the bitterness of a Bernard, or the persecuting zeal of a Dominic, or the obstinacy of a Luther. It is a very different matter when the very ideals of Christianity are extinguished, the sensuous substituted for the spiritual in worship, bringing in its train idolatry and a saint worship little else than polytheism come again, the sensual permitted unchallenged in those exalted to holiest duty, free rein given to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, and pretensions to powers upheld which are nothing short of blasphemous. All this in the name of Christ, all this in the life of many

a pope and cardinal—and yet Christianity has survived it! Out of destructive fires within, far more serious than any kindled from without, it has repeatedly emerged like the phœnix, leaving its ashes behind and appearing with a new vitality and pristine purity. And the secret of it is just this: Christianity is always a despair and a fascination. It always presents two sides. There are always choice souls who catch its spirit even in the most degenerate days. In them its truth has always found embodiment. It has always been able to produce, as though fresh from the source, a type of character all its own, which stands in marked contrast to the world and to what is found in its own degenerate professors. It has produced a language, a literature, a life, an ambition, peculiar to itself and of rare refinement. Here men instinctively feel they have come on the real Christianity. In spite of defections that are disastrous and seem doomed to destroy it for ever, they recognise the holy seed which only Christianity has been able to produce in this world. This has been its salvation. This has set afresh the great ideals in their proper light and its signal value has

been acknowledged. Indeed, it has been seen that here alone, not in institutions but in this spirit, is the true Christianity to be found. Its history reveals that essentially Christianity is nothing else than a vitalising power, a transcendent ideal, to which at best we can only secure approximations.

That is, as Tolstoi has pointed out, the explanation of the constantly apparent discord between the life of the Christian peoples and the Christian conception of the meaning of life and its guidance for conduct in view of that, though I doubt the truth of his opinion that the discord was never so great as it is to-day. Possibly the sense of the discord was never greater; but that is only a testimony to the growing sensitiveness of conscience which Christianity is producing both without and within its borders. The better Christ's revelation is understood, the grander does the Christian ideal of individual and corporate life appear, and the more hopeless seems the possibility of attainment. Self is such a persistent drag that effort fails to keep pace with enlightenment. There follows in consequence an apparent divorce between faith and practice. But deeper insight leads

to the conviction that in the wider sweep of general Christian sentiment as well as in the individual life there is something more than the merely nominal. Behind general and individual failure there is the spirit that voices itself in Tersteegen's hymn, 'Verborgne Liebe Gottes du'—

> 'Hindrances strow all the way;
> I aim at Thee, yet from Thee stray.
>
> . . . . .
>
> O when shall all my wanderings end,
> And all my steps to Theeward tend?'

So much for the remarkable historical phenomenon of the persistence of Christianity in spite of corruption and degeneracy within, so much for its extraordinary recuperative capacity and the power of the original conceptions of Christ to reassert themselves and to recover respect for His cause and regard for His authority. It is a testimony to the divine character of Christianity.

But the place of Christianity in history is not properly understood or appreciated, if it is only looked at by itself and studied in the light of the progress of its own dogmas, institutions, and membership. The true history of Christianity is the history of its influence

on the world. Its place in history is determined by the extent to which it has modified, subdued, and elevated the world, and brought the world's ways of thought and life into harmony with the mind of Christ. How far have laws, customs, habits, ways of trade and commerce been impregnated with the principles Christ laid down? How far have things alien to the spirit of Christ been ameliorated, rescued from sheer savagery, even if not yet wholly eliminated, by the rising tide of humaneness generated by Christ? How far have thought, study, art, science, taken new directions, run on new lines, at the inspiration of Christianity? The answers to questions like these tell where Christianity stands in the world's history.

Perhaps the quickest way to get an answer to that is to take the line suggested by the romance, *When it was dark.* Blot out Christianity, and then try to write the history of the last nineteen centuries. The thing is impossible. The play of Hamlet with the part of Hamlet left out would be a finished masterpiece compared to it. How are you to explain the most momentous events in the course of these years without it? The transformation

of the Roman Empire, the rise of Mohammedanism, the Crusades, the reconstitution of modern Europe,—leave out Christianity and the student will tell you that the movements he sees there are as unintelligible as the movements of the heavenly bodies were to the astronomers, until the Copernican system was understood and its truthfulness demonstrated by Newton's discovery of the law of gravitation. The student must have postulated something like Christianity, had no record of it remained, in order to explain the world's history.

At first Christianity had to fight against tremendous odds for its very existence. Indeed, its persistence here, its inextinguishable vitality here, is no less remarkable, no less evidential of its divine nature, than its power to overcome destructive influences from within to which reference has already been made. Christians cannot too often remind themselves of the humble origins of their faith. Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth, and the twelve men of His choice, without worldly resources, by purely spiritual methods, in the face of deadliest opposition, including the crucifixion after three short years of the Founder, play such a part

that the cause for which they strive speedily rises to be the dominant force in the life of the world. What is this but divine miracle?

The disruptive effect of Christianity was very quickly recognised by the forces which it came to undermine. Not so by its own adherents. Christians could not see it. Christ's message seemed to them so welcome that they could think of nothing but an enthusiastic reception everywhere for such gracious proposals. No, said Christ, who knew humanity better, 'I came not to send peace, but a sword'; and the way in which, for instance, His messengers were characterised at Thessalonica verified His judgment to the letter. What did they call the Christian apostles there? 'These that have turned the world upside down.' They were right. Christianity comes as the great disturber of the peace, the peace of indifference, selfishness, tyranny, which only wishes for a continuance of its old bad ways. Christianity is the great revolutionary. In that sense it is quite true that she has been 'the fruitful mother of strife,' and where the strife which she has caused has been the striving for truth and righteousness and against tyranny and oppres-

sion, is there anything to be ashamed of in it? True, men have exploited her fair name to serve their selfish ends and invoked the blessing of the Prince of Peace on undertakings that were far liker the works of darkness. For these she declines responsibility and repudiates their appeal. But wherever she has interfered for the overturning of error or wickedness in the world of religion, politics, or commerce—and she has done so many a time, and will do it again—she has only been indicating her claim to a divine origin. She has only been showing herself an instrument in the hand of the Lord, who 'turneth the earth upside down . . . and it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him.' The cause which addresses itself to redress wrong in any portion of the body politic is in line with this Great Revolutionary, God.

Spurgeon had a very apt comment on the description of aggressive Christianity as turning the world upside down. 'Yes,' he said, 'but it

set the world on its feet.' In Greek the word for revolution is closely akin to the word for resurrection. They spring from the same root. Now resurrection, as we saw long ago, is the distinctive note, the crowning proof, of Christianity. As the hymn says, 'Love, joy, peace, like flowers, spring in its path to birth.' But before proceeding to demonstrate this let us note these three great stages subsequent to its first appearance, at which Christianity came decisively to the front in determining the course of history.

For the first three hundred years after its introduction Christianity had to fight for its existence. By that time it had so demonstrated its vitality and power to vitalise the decaying life of mankind, that the Emperor Constantine gave up the struggle against it which his predecessors had maintained and made Christianity the religion of the Empire. Under Julian the attempt was made to hark back to the old pagan ways, only to end in failure, and to stamp more emphatically than ever the political wisdom and foresight of Constantine, expressed even in the famous words of the dying reactionary himself, 'O Galilean, thou hast

conquered.' Whether this imperial favour and countenance was for the health and true prosperity of the cause of Christ or not is, on review, a matter of serious question. But there is no question of the evidence it affords of the influence Christianity was exerting. There is no question that it had far reaching consequences for the future course of history. Indeed, it made Christian interests the dominating concern for generations to come, and determined the course of empire East and West.

The second critical event was the founding in the days of Charlemagne (800 A.D.) of the Holy Roman Empire. It was a great Christian interest that was at the heart of that far-reaching movement. If, as Mr. Bryce says, it is on religion that the inmost and deepest life of a nation rests,[1] and if, as Edgar Quinet says, the world is ruled by religious ideas,[2] we need not be surprised that the great thought of the unity of God brought back the minds of men to the idea of the oneness of humanity, or that the thought of the union of God and man in one person in Christ should have led to the idea

[1] *Holy Roman Empire*, p. 92.
[2] *La Christianisme et la Révolution française*, p. 9 ff.

that in the unity of mankind there should be two great authorities, one on the spiritual and the other on the temporal side, a world bishop and a world emperor. They had the world bishop in the bishop of Rome; they set up the empire that in the emperor they might have the pope's counterpart in things temporal. And their idea was that he who held the empire should 'typify spiritual unity, preserve peace, and be a fountain of that by which alone among imperfect men peace is preserved and restored, law and justice.'[1] It was a great idea. It was a momentous event, when they gave it a great embodiment. And with greater or less efficiency, according to the man who held the office, it served great ends for centuries to come.

The third critical event was the Reformation. And nothing brings out the supreme significance of the Christian influence like a comparison of the Reformation and its effects with the effects of the contemporary movement of an almost pagan character, the Renaissance. Compare the lands where the Reformation prevailed with those where the Renaissance predominated, and what does history say?

[1] Bryce, *Holy Roman Empire*, p. 254.

Take Italy, the Italy of the last four centuries. That was the land of the Renaissance. To this day we visit the land to revel in its treasures. But let this stern warning never be missed. Even to-day that land is only slowly recovering from the stagnation and decay that set in in Venice, Florence, Genoa, Rome, from the day they sacrificed Christian to Pagan ideals, followed the Renaissance, and rejected the Reformation. In contrast take any nation of the north of Europe. The Reformation awakened the souls of these peoples. It set new ideals of life and manhood before them. It introduced a ferment, the effect of which is not yet exhausted. And it is no mere *obiter dictum* of an irresponsible amateur, but the judgment of an accredited historian, James Anthony Froude,—'the Reformation is the hinge on which all Modern History turns.'

All that, it may be said, demonstrates the influence which Christianity has exerted on the course of the world's history. It does not prove that its influence has been for good. Very well then; contrast then and now, B.C. and A.D. Before Christianity came into the world, before its agents reached many quarters,

a high state of civilisation had often been reached. Egypt, Assyria, Greece, Rome, India, China, Peru, all bear this out. The architectural and sculptural remains of these civilisations are the admiration and wonder of enlightened Europe. In many of their features we cannot surpass them ; we are glad to have them as models. But what of that? Christianity is not to be identified with civilisation. Civilisation is the process—or the result at which the process arrives—of making men citizens, fit to live wisely and usefully with one another, and the provision of all that will conduce to the attainment of this result. You may say that is what Christianity aims at, and therefore the civilisation which it succeeds in producing is a fair test of Christianity. And that would be true, if Christianity were the only influence at work in the making of modern civilisation. But that is not so. Many other influences are at work which are hostile to the spirit of Christianity. The whole materialistic tendency, which looks no farther than creature comfort, abundance of means, artistic adornment, facilities for travel, facilities for amusement, is certainly far from Christian. Art for

art's sake, unbridled licence for natural instincts, irrespective of moral considerations—these are not Christian. No, the very mission of Christianity is the moralisation of civilisation, its spiritualisation. These very wonders of ancient art and architecture, so far as we know, were purchased at a cost of human life and happiness that makes them the condemnation as well as the glory of the ages from which they come. And the triumph of Christianity lies in the extent to which the influence which it exerts makes luxury and indulgence and self-glorification of the few at the cost of the exploitation of the many a growing impossibility.

Compare London of to-day with the Rome of Cæsar's day, and apart from mechanical contrivances it might seem as if there were not very much difference between them. The same extremes of wealth and poverty, the same voluptuousness and excess, the same hotbeds of vice and shame. And superficially this is true, but only superficially. To mention nothing else, a glance below the surface would reveal that for every free man in Rome there were three slaves, and the slaves were frequently men of far better character and intelligence

than the free men. How far-reaching a difference that implies! 'The differences are essential and fundamental. A society which rests upon servitude cannot be like a society which rests upon freedom. Christianity has modified the whole lives of those who do *not* profess it. It has created a totally new atmosphere. . . . Cæsar could scarcely have understood the idea of an indissoluble marriage, of a limited monarchy, of equality before the law.'[1] It is when one looks below the surface, and takes notice of the difference of the way in which the sores and scandals and vices of society, when they continue in a Christian land, are regarded even by the majority of those who are not Christian or whose profession of Christianity is but languid, that the difference is perceived. And if there were nothing more than that, it would mean much.

But open a book like Loring Brace's *Gesta Christi*, *i.e.* the achievements of Christ. Simply to read the contents is to realise that with the coming of Christ humanity passed into another world. We are so familiar with the tale that

[1] Herbert Paul, *Life of Froude*, p. 339.

we are constantly forgetting then and now. Take the degradation of woman, slavery, gladiatorial displays, exposure of children, torture, wreckers' rights, duelling, war, neglect of the poor and the sick. To name these is enough. Before the approach of Christianity some of these terrible evils have already vanished; the others are steadily giving way. We may not have arrived at perfection, but the difference between then and now is immeasurable.

And it is not only the things that have been done. It is the spirit which has been engendered. It is the ideas which have been introduced and diffused, and which have been accepted as though they had always been beyond question by those who refuse allegiance to Christ and who do not know that they owe our cherished watchwords to Him. The great watchwords of the French Revolution, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, now recognised as basal truths in any worthy society—where did these come from? To hear some men talk, it might be imagined that these were a gift to humanity from the men who had broken with Christianity and called themselves the Free-

thinkers. Such a claim is riddled through and through by Principal Fairbairn.[1] He shows that while political liberty was scouted by Hobbes, Bolingbroke, Hume, and Gibbon, and religious liberty by Voltaire, Montesquieu, and in practice by the French revolutionary atheists when in power, it is to the Reformers and the Puritans, Knox, and Robinson, and Harry Vane you must turn, who again drew their inspiration from Christ, to find liberty's springs. Equality has no firm basis but the great fact of a common need, of a common salvation provided by our Saviour God, who is no respecter of persons. And fraternity is a mere fiction, save on the footing of the brotherhood of men in the family of the heavenly Father redeemed by the well-beloved Son, the first begotten among many brethren.

Still more, account must be taken of the men that Christianity has produced. The worthiest leaders of mankind have all been Christians. To give names in proof is superfluous. Rather, what far-reaching benefactor of his kind has arisen since the days of Christ who has not owed everything that won him the

[1] *Religion in History*, p. 222 ff.

respect and attention and regard of his fellows to Jesus Christ? So the tale grows. The world owes all that is best in it to our Lord. In the world of thought or in the world of action, in the pages of the history of philosophy, or of the annals of men and nations, one question must be answered, one chapter must be written whose theme is this, What think ye of Christ? What shall we do with Jesus? Without that the work is doomed to incompleteness and failure. Without Christ the world had really come to a standstill, was under sentence of death. He set it on its way again, and ever since, through men inspired by His spirit, He has kept it on an upward, though often, owing to the world's own truculence, a painfully slowly upward, course. We live in the midst of the process, but it is at work. 'The Kingdom of Heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.'

CHRISTIANITY AND THE FUTURE

'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.'—REV. xi. 15.

CHAPTER XIX

CHRISTIANITY AND THE FUTURE

MEN have always viewed the future with a curious, anxious eye. They have always looked to their religion to cast light on it. Oracle and auspices have been adjuncts of every faith. And Christianity has to reckon with this craving and offer its forecast of the future. It is to that we turn in this concluding chapter of these studies in the Certainties of the Christian faith.

The subject may be looked at under three aspects—the future of the world, the future of Christianity itself, and the future of the individual.

1. The future of the world.

The world as here thought of is not the planet on which human life has its locus. It may be left to astronomers, chemists, geologists, to estimate the duration of the earth's exist-

ence and the probabilities as to its ultimate fate. The world of whose future men are anxious to know something is the world of humanity, the race that dwells on earth. What is in store for it?

The outlook upon it, whether through the eyes of science or of history, is often most perplexing. The banks of the river of history are strewn with the wreckage of past civilisations. Every continent contains them. There are not alone the familiar ruins of Assyria and Egypt, of India, Greece, and Rome. But they are found in the Malay Archipelago, in the centre of Africa, in Mexico and Peru. Everywhere there are great architectural remains that tell of artistic skill and mechanical contrivance as advanced as anything we possess, but which have passed and have left no legacy of enlarged intelligence. As men stand among such ruins and find the peoples dwelling around them to-day sunk low in the scale of civilisation, incapable of repeating these marvels, they are driven to ask themselves, is this to be for ever the fate of the race? Is its course to be a continual rise and fall like the flow and ebb of the tide, now filling one bay and empty-

ing another, but never making any real progress? If so, to what end is human living? Is life worth living?

The same thought arises in another way, namely, at the spectacle of the history of literature. Greece had its palmy days of Homer and the dramatists, Plato and the philosophers. Rome had its Augustan age. Britain had its spring tide in Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and again in the Victorian era. But these pass and leave no worthy successors. What does it mean? Is there no such thing as progress in the history of the thinking of mankind? Is evolution the mere rotation of a wheel returning upon itself? Do these waves carry us no farther up the beach?

What does Christianity see in all this? What does she teach us to recognise and deduce from it as to the destiny of our race?

Broadly, Christianity tells us this. The world is a scene of judgment. The wreckage of past civilisations is the record of ineffectual efforts after life, ineffectual because based on a false idea of what is of prime significance in life, namely, the intellectual or aesthetic or material instead of the moral and the spiritual.

These are the results of man's efforts to go his own way rather than follow the will of God. But since Christianity has come, a new idea of the meaning of life has entered. Gradually, very gradually, it is gaining ground, and as a result, while wave succeeds wave, and there is the back wash, each does gain a little on its forerunner. But there is another side to it. Judgment continues. The forces of evil and the forces of righteousness are becoming each more and more concentrated and antagonistic. Crises are becoming more acute. The lines are being more sharply drawn between those on Christ's side and those against Him. They are not, however, the lines of mere theological opinion or ecclesiastical connection, but of Christian practice, moral character, and spiritual worth. Things are working up to a great, final judgment, when the mystery of iniquity will be stripped bare, exposed, and sentenced, and all who love it be overwhelmed in its ruin, while righteousness will be vindicated and enjoy its triumph.

That is the meaning of times of unrest and ferment like the present. Too often these only produce misgiving and alarm for the ark of

God in the breast of Christians. They cannot understand God's great way. 'Wars and rumours of wars' cause them dismay. They should not. God is not afraid to make the wrath of man to praise Him. He has used revolution in France to undermine the forces of wickedness and give truth and righteousness a chance. It was pusillanimity for Edmund Burke to stand back from this in fear. It was unworthy of Carlyle to tell the story and never dare to read the meaning.[1] So in the present day. Men forget that the Kingdom of God is like leaven. If it is, it is bound to produce a ferment. Shall we be surprised at the signs of it, then? Is the shaking of the earth to strike terror into the hearts of those who know Whose hand it is, that shakes it? There is none of whom that is said more frequently than God. But why such shaking? 'That the things which cannot be shaken may remain,' and from Him we have 'received a kingdom which cannot be moved.'

Times of ferment are the Christian's opportunity. There he finds openings where before there were none. It is well for him when the

[1] Mazzini, *Essay on Carlyle's French Revolution.*

spirit of inquiry is abroad. Nothing is so deadly as mere mute acquiescence. It is another phase of indifference. But to-day in every sphere and in every land, in the world of politics, of industry, of scientific investigation, men are on the alert. They are not content with things as they are. The insufficiency of the materialistic view is plain. Its spell is broken. The world is growing tired of the pursuit of pelf and pleasure and filthy lucre. In the world of science where till lately men found only dead matter in the universe, their successors find life and mind and spirit. It was a small symptom of the change, but it was significant. Journeying home from Switzerland the writer lately was in a compartment of a French train, where the fellow-travellers, all strangers, were French men and women, and there all the books being read dealt with some aspect of religion — *The Religious Spirit, Christian Teaching and Socialism*, a novel by Alphonse Daudet on evangelistic methods and ways. That meant much. It is all full of promise.

But the Christian must not deceive himself and imagine that the day of battle is over. All

this is opportunity to rally the forces to the standard of Christ. For as surely as that all who are of the truth will hear Christ's voice, so surely will all that is evil be stirred to antagonism more pronounced and intense. Indifference will not give way simply to interest and zeal, but also to hostility and attack. If Christianity is present in the world as a ferment, it is also there as a touchstone. Like a magnet it attracts or repels. And when the world's day of final decision is come, the fate of its multitudes will be decided by the standard of righteousness which Christ has set up. Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision; the shock of battle; and Christ the Judge upon the throne—that is the climax to which the world, now with a rush and now with measured step and slow, is steadily moving; the end of things as they are, and the beginning of things as they are to be.

2. The future of Christianity.

What has just been said leads up to the consideration of the future of Christianity itself. If there is one conviction more deeply wrought into the heart of the Christian than another, it is the certainty of the ultimate world-wide

triumph of Christ and His cause. It might be enough to say in justification of this conviction that this is Christ's business, and therefore it cannot be otherwise. And that is enough for the Christian. It is the inspiration of whole-hearted, undaunted service, the spring of unslackening missionary enterprise. But it is worth while to notice some considerations that point to the reasonableness of this faith.

For one thing, there is the strange power of survival and persistence over hostile and disruptive forces operating either without or within which Christianity has displayed during the two thousand years of its existence. It has a latent strength which is never exhausted, a recuperative power which never fails, a resurgent buoyancy which will never allow it to be permanently submerged by the waves of time or the billows of distress. Mr. G. K. Chesterton has pointed this out in his own quaint way. 'Its strength,' he says somewhere, 'lies not in the fact that it is eloquent or successful or well represented; it lies in the incidental fact that it is indispensable. By indispensable I mean this: it is, to all mortal appearance, impossible for men to

attack Christianity without eventually ending up in positions that no sane masses of men have ever held, in positions which would horrify a decent pagan or an unbaptized savage. Schopenhauer ends by saying that life itself is a delusion. Nietzsche ends by saying that charity itself is a delusion. You end by saying that human goodness and badness are a delusion. Christianity does not answer . . . for she is old and has seen so many paradoxes. She knows the path you are on . . . and that that way madness lies. She knows that as soon as you want any conceivable human reality, if it be only to say "thank you" for the mustard, you will be forced to return to her and her hypothesis where she sits guarding through the ages the secret of an eternal sanity.'

Mr. Benjamin Kidd again in his *Principles of Western Civilisation* has elaborated the theory, with abundance of proof from every quarter, that the institutions, empires, peoples, which survive are those which, consciously or unconsciously, and so long as they do so, subordinate the present to the interests of the future. History tells us to meet the cry 'Let

us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,' with the reminder that to-morrow we do not die; and we cannot both eat our cake and have it. But if ever this law of deferred bonuses had a striking illustration, it is in Christianity itself. It has always insisted that God has kept the best in store. It has bidden men sacrifice the fleeting for the eternal. It has treated present privilege as only the earnest and promise of what is still to come, in order to stimulate to ever greater exertion or sacrifice, if need be, by the spur of more glorious hopes. Its golden age lies ahead, not behind. Its paradise is before it, not in the distant past; not lost, but to win. Its finger always points to the future. Its watchwords are faith and hope.

The forces, too, on which it depends are those which prevail, namely, peace and love. Oliver Wendell Holmes says that in the world there are two great armies—

> 'One marches to the drum beat's roll,
> And bears upon a crimson scroll
> "Our glory is to slay."
>
> One moves in silence by the stream,
> Along its front no sabres shine,
> No blood-red pennons wave;

Its banners bear the single line,
"Our Duty is to Save."'

Is it necessary to tell Christian people with which of these two the future lies? The learned Japanese, Inazo Nitobé, in his book already quoted, in a searching comparison of Christianity and the code of honour of his own country which is the best substitute for a religion which they have, and which for a moment cast a spell on Western minds after Japan's great victory over Russia, sees the answer writ large on the page of history. 'If history can teach us anything,' he says, 'the state built on martial virtues—be it a city like Sparta or an empire like Rome—can never make on earth a continuing city. The history of the world confirms the prophecy that "the meek shall inherit the earth." A nation that sells its birthright of peace and backslides from the front rank of industrialism into the file of filibusterism makes a poor bargain indeed!'[1] What need there is for the nations of the West to listen to this in their hours of panic and blatant militarism! But Christianity herself has to be reminded to be

[1] *Bushido*, p. 185 ff.

true to herself. Many a time she has been tempted, and has yielded to the temptation, to lean on an arm of flesh, to grasp carnal weapons instead of relying on spiritual weapons alone. The result has always been disastrous. Every such weapon has been found a boomerang. It is only by tenderness and love, by meekness and patience and sacrifice and martyrdom its victories have been won, and these are its guarantee of the future. It has a constant arsenal from which to obtain supplies. The indwelling spirit of its Master is the constant generative force to reproduce the conquering power; and it is bound to survive and triumph through its inherent power of an endless—an indissoluble—life.

To put this in another way, it is the supreme merit of Christianity that it has laid capital emphasis on the spiritual, subordinated everything else to that. It is only when things are looked at in the light of the spiritual that life seems reasonable, its aims cease to be meaningless, the mere come and go of a fly in the sunlight. It is only when things are lifted into the sphere of the spiritual that they escape the regions of decay. And that is where

Christianity has set them. Christ has set life in its proper aspect before the eyes of men. He has taken it out of the limits of the temporal and has found its place for it in the sphere of the eternal. He has shown its possibilities and therefore its significance for God. And if life, human life, has a value for God, men realise that it is no bubble they have in their hands. This service has never been effectively rendered by any other than our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is here that the element of finality, and therefore of permanence and victory, lies in the Christian religion. It has brought God and man together. True, every religion attempts that. But the excellence of Christianity is that it has done it with a perfect understanding of all that it is essential, if peace and amity, and not enmity, is to prevail. It has probed the deepest needs of the human heart. It has met the strict requirements of divine righteousness. In it truth has met with mercy, righteousness and peace have kissed mutually. God is well pleased, and man's heart is forgiven and at rest. It is the final answer to man's most anxious quest.

These considerations all go to show that the Christian confidence of the triumph of Christianity is no vain imagination but a reasonable faith. They show that Christianity possesses in itself the essentials of permanence and victory. And the man who pins his faith and maintains his allegiance to it is no fool: for it is one thing to cry for the moon; it is another to hitch your wagon to a star.

Still it must not be forgotten that while Christianity is indispensable to any man or people that wants to survive the fleeting and transitory, and while for its own extension and advancement it requires the active co-operation of its adherents, it is quite independent of any individual, race, nation, phase of civilisation, church, creed, or philosophic system. It may be quite true, as Mrs. Browning says, that

> '. . . Civilisation perfected
> Is fully developed Christianity';

but it is a grave mistake to identify Christianity with western civilisation. It is a matter of immense importance to Britain whether it continues Christian or not; it is relatively a small matter to Christianity. It knows no

possibility of a Yellow Peril, as it is called. It sees in Malay and Chinaman—ay, or Negro for that matter — material for just as good Christians as in Latin or Teuton. If they respond to Christ's approaches, and prove more loyal to His will than Briton, German, or American, the crown will pass to them without hesitation, only with regret that those who did run well should have ceased to obey the truth. This is not impossible. Lands once Christian have lapsed from the faith, and sunk back into moral decay and spiritual torpor. Witness North Africa, the land of Cyprian and Augustine; Egypt, the land of Origen and Athanasius; Asia Minor, the land of Basil and the Gregories; Syria and Palestine, the land of our Lord Himself. But Christianity has survived. It has simply wiped the dust of those who grew callous off its feet, and passed on to other cities. There it has been welcomed, has thriven and prospered and spread to ever new domains. As with peoples, so with creeds and churches. Creeds outworn, mingled truth and error, have been sifted and left behind, when their purpose was served. Churches have played their part, then have

lost their first love, become dead with only a name to live, grown lukewarm as Laodicea, and had their candlestick removed out of its place. No church, Lutheran, Anglican, or Roman, no system, Presbyterian or Papal, is final or indispensable. Christianity uses now one, now another, according to their purity and zeal, but is independent of them all. And this extraordinary detachment and independence all along the line, is again a part of the secret of its vitality, a pledge of its survival and victory. It is a life, a free spirit, unquenchable, eternal; on earth, but a thing of heaven.

3. The future of the individual.

The third aspect of the future is as it affects the individual. It is plain that everything depends for him on the attitude he takes up towards this conquering power. His destiny for eternity will be determined according as he ranges himself on its side or against it. And the one spells bliss and the other spells woe. He has the choice in his own hand. What he does in most cases will mainly affect himself, only in a subordinate way the great cause at stake. For, as Mazzini says, looking

at things on the sombre side, 'the individual has the power of choice between good and evil, and is personally liable to the consequences of that choice; but he cannot achieve the prolonged triumph of evil in the world.'[1] If he choose evil, he will share its fate.

Look for a moment at the alternatives.

(*a*) On the one hand, there is the fate of him who rejects Christ, deliberately turns a deaf ear to all His approaches, withholds from Him the confidence He invites, treats Him with indifference or scorn, and lives the life of vice, heartlessness, or hypocrisy. There is only one word for that man's fate, to which an obstinately rejected Christ must leave him. Woe awaits him, unutterable woe. He is ruined; and he has his portion, where he has chosen it, with the devil and his angels. In Scripture there is a veil of indefiniteness over what exactly that woe shall be, and no good purpose is served by drawing on the imagination to heighten the terror of the picture. But we can understand how terrible must be the state of mind of the man who sees at last what he

[1] *Essay on Carlyle's French Revolution*, p. 167. (Walter Scott.)

has deliberately put away from him, sees that he is lost and what he has lost, and is left shut out from the presence of the Lord for ever. Chagrin, despair, self-reproach will be ceaseless in their unavailing clamour within his breast, and that without hope of reversal. For while we speak of reserve, indefiniteness, reticence as to the woe, it is to foster a false confidence, if it is not frankly stated that whatever theories of future probation men may spin, they have no solid ground in any word of Christ or of His apostles.

(*b*) On the other hand, nothing can exceed the explicitness of Christian teaching as to the bliss in store for those who have welcomed Christ's offers of mercy, have given Him their confidence, staked their all on Him, have caught His spirit, made His will their law, His cause their business. In common parlance, they have heaven in store, and every believing soul interprets that in its own way. The child has its own idea of heaven, the lover of nature, the veteran, the mother or husband bereaved, the sufferer, the aged saint: and no one of them will be disappointed. The treasures of earth, air, and sky, the beauty of woodland,

river, mountain, and sea, the splendour of earth's rarest gems, the tenderest joys of the human heart, have all been brought into requisition to unfold its glories. But was it needed? Is it not enough to know that we shall be with Christ and with all who love Him, shall see His face, and have eternity to spend in unhampered service in His employ? Surely that is enough. May every one who reads these pages enjoy it!

Every one is familiar with the custom which prevails of the whole audience rising and standing when the Hallelujah Chorus of Handel's *Messiah* is sung. It originated in the spontaneous act of King George II. under the spell of the music when first he heard it. And no wonder! A dusky son of Africa, a venerable missionary, told me that when he heard it, it so overpowered him that he thought that the music of heaven must be like that. The king's tribute was no mere compliment to the composer; it was a solemn acknowledgment of Him of whom it sang, by whom kings reign and princes decree justice. It was the reproduction in another way of what Handel himself felt when he composed its strains.

How did he explain the writing of his masterpiece? 'I did think I did see all heaven before me and the great God Himself.' That is his own account of it. It was an inspiration. It was the majesty of the theme that evoked the music. It voices the crowning outburst, the climax of heavenly song, in the Book of the Revelation, the pæan of victory, the victory of the Lamb over the last great effort of His foes. When it broke on John's ear, he heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings saying, 'Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.' What has called out this shout of triumph? Why are His servants bending low in adoration before God? The powers of evil had gathered to a head under the command of what had fancied herself an eternal city, great Babylon. They had joined issue with the forces of God, and Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and 'the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.' That was John's vision of what was coming. That, seen in the light of eternity, so certain that heaven's

inhabitants celebrated it as though already accomplished, was what made heaven ring with Hallelujahs. That is the Christian conviction; that is Faith's Certainty, the Christian's assured hope as to the Future. And he that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself as He is pure.

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